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OCTOBER 30 1981

## contents

GRAHAM REYNOLDS SAMUEL HYNES	William L. Pressly: The Life and Art of James Barry Alan Bishop (Editor): Chronicle of Youth - Vera Brittain's War Diary 1913-1917	1251-52
PETER SINGER	L. W. Sumner: Abortion and Moral Theory	1253
BLAKE MORRISON LACHLAN MACKINNON	Hugo Williams: No Particular Place to Go Harold Toller: The Past that Poets Make	1254
CLAIRE TOMALIN	Beth Darlington (Editor): My Dearest Love - Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth 1810	1255
BLAIR WORDEN KEVIN SIARPE	Pauline Gregg: King Charles I Roy E. Schreiber: The Political Career of Sir Robert Naughton 1589-1635	1256
HAROLD HEAVER CHRISTOPHER REID	Michael Barry Goodman: Contemporary Literary Censorship - The Case History of Burroughs' "Naked Lunch" So much to read, so little to understand (poem) Information, please	1257-58
GEOFFREY MARSHALL ANTHONY THWAITE	Michael Walzer: Radical Principles The Small Brown Nun (poem)	1259
CAROL RUMENS LINDA TAYLOR T. J. BINYON	Toni Morrison: Tar Baby Helen Washington (Editor): Any Woman's Blues Lisa Zeldner: Customs Dan Kavanagh: Fiddle City	1260
LOUIS ALLEN	Richard Tames: Servant of the Shogun Henry Smith (Editor): Learning from Shogun Michael MacIntyre: The Shogun Inheritance	1261-62
D. J. ENRIGHT CHRISTOPHER REID	Michael Pye: Everyday Japanese Characters Louise Allison Cort: Shigaraki, Potters' Valley	1263
MICHAEL SULLIVAN RICHARD STORRY	John W. Dower (Editor): A Century of Japanese Photography Marius Jansen: Japan and Its World	1264
JAMES MELVILLE	Matsumoto Sei-ichi: Jumanbun no Ichu no Guzen Tendo Shin: Tokki ni Me Arite Nishimura Kyotaro: Shuchakueki Satsujin Jiken Yokomizo Seishi: Gokumon Shima Akuma no Temari Uta Niki Etoku: Satsujin Haisenzu Natsuki Shizuko: Johatsu Moriwaka Sei-ichi: Ningen no Shomete Oyabu Haruhiko: Chohokyoaku Hakai Han-in Ikushima Jiro: Massatsu Shirai Akagawa Jiro: Yurei Ressha Awakawa Tsumoto: Kotai no Matsuri	1265
KENNETH O. MORGAN JULIE HANKEY ANDREW MOTION	Commentary Trevor Griffiths: Country (BBC TV) Shakespeare after the Romantics (Riverside Studios) George Borrow: a centenary lecture by Enoch Powell at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature Jean Genet: The Males (Lyric Studio, Hammersmith) The Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period 1600-1868 (Royal Academy) Judging the Booker Prize	1266-68
HERMIONE LEE	To the Editor Among this week's contributors	1269
FRANK TUOHY FRANCIS KING T. J. BINYON DAVID LINDLEY	Takeshi Kalko: Into a Black Sun Tayama Katai: The Quilt and Other Stories Roger Pulvers: The Death of Urashima Taro Basho Travelling (poem)	1270
SUMIE OKADA CARMEN BLACKER	Edmund Blunden and his "Dearest Autumn" (article) Harold Stewart: By the Old Walls of Kyoto	1271-72
JEAN-PIERRE LEHMANN	Thomas M. Huber: The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan Roger W. Bowen: Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan T. P. Knaul: Zen Action Zen Person	1273
MICHAEL PYE	G. C. Allen: The Japanese Economy Julian Grosser, Koichiro Fujikura and Akio Morishima: Environmental Law in Japan	1274
JEREMY HARDIE RONALD DORE	Donald Keene: Meeting with Japan. Travels in Japan Eugene Fodor (Editor): Fodor's Budget Japan '81 Pat Barry: Japan Howard Smith (Editor): Inside Japan Alberto Arbasino: Trans-Pacific Express	1275
ANTHONY THWAITE	Endymion Wilkinson: Misunderstanding - Europe versus Japan Jean Selz: Foujita	1276
FOSCO MARAINI	Lawrence Taylor: A Trial of Generals - Homma, Yamashita, MacArthur Celestial double haiku of the rising sun (poem)	1277
RICHARD STORRY QUENTIN BELL	Hiroaki Sato and Burton Watson (Editors): From the Country of Eight Islands - An Anthology of Japanese Poetry Paul Reps: 10 Ways to Meditate	1278
GEOFFREY BEST GAVIN EWART	The free ways of Arthur Watay (article) P. G. O'Neill: An Introduction to No Drama Kinoshita Junji: Shigosen no matsu Yoshinobu Inoura and Tada Kawaiake: The Traditional Theatre of Japan	1279-80
JAMES KIRKUP MICHAEL PYE	Peter Lowe: Britain in the Far East Donald T. Roden: School days in Imperial Japan	1281
EDWARD SEIDENSTICKER BRIAN POWELL	Akira Iriye: Power and Culture - The Japanese-American War 1941-1945 Stephen S. Large: Organized Workers and Socialist Politics in Interwar Japan	1282
C. J. DUNN	Richard Gordon: Doctors' Daughters Bruce Arnold: The Muted Swan	1283

## BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS

## The end of the Grand Manner

By Graham Reynolds

**WILLIAM L. PRESSLY:**  
The Life and Art of James Barry  
320pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
0 300 02466 5

In his fourth Discourse, delivered in 1771, Sir Joshua Reynolds urged the students of the Royal Academy to choose subjects which were compatible with the Grand Style. These must be dignified and of universal concern. "Such are the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education and his usual course of reading have made familiar." By turning the minds of his young auditors in this epic direction Reynolds was creating a number of problems for them. In fact his advice went against the trend of his time, which did not encourage the grand, the heroic, the historical. It was confusing at the start that he should equate "history" with "fable" and suggest that they were both as readily adapted to the needs of painters and their potential public. Certainly it was not difficult for politicians, journalists and the leaders of society to find close parallels between Roman history and the happenings of their own times. Edmund Burke, a generous but hardly used patron of James Barry, modelled himself upon Cicero, and it is easy to see the similarity in the approach of these two statesmen to politics. Turner's robust patriotism was to be gloomily pervaded by the disturbing resemblances he saw between his country and the last stages of the Carthaginian empire. But what relevance had the loves of Jupiter and Juno on Mount Ida to that rationalistic age? It was difficult enough to obtain a commission to paint biblical scenes in this nominally Christian country. Unless Greek myth was to supply an excuse for an exercise in erotic painting - and Barry would have indignantly denied such a motive when he painted this subject - it had no living significance for patrons or the viewing public.

The career on which Reynolds wished his students to embark made severe demands on their literary knowledge. How far was he justified in assuming that these aspiring artists in the Academy Schools had followed that "usual course of reading"

which made Greek and Roman life and thought familiar to all Europe? Perhaps this was so in France. Edmund R., the hero of *Le Paysan Perverti*, was accepted as an apprentice to an Auxerre painter on the grounds that "he loves reading, and knows the Bible by heart, and as for Latin he understands it well, and also a little Greek, and M le Curé says that these are sufficient accomplishments for what he wants to do." Richard Wilson could quote Horace to effect on any occasion, but more active exponents of the Grand Style were often far less well equipped. Benjamin West, who may fairly be said to have taken the lead in British history painting in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was so ill prepared for this role that drastic educational measures had to be devised to help him achieve his ambition. When he was first commissioned in Philadelphia to paint a classical subject, he had to confess that he had never heard of the death of Socrates or any similar episode in ancient history. Dr Drummond, having proposed that he should paint the story of Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus, sent for his Tacitus and read aloud to the artist the passage he wanted him to illustrate, with many suggestions about the treatment of detail. George III emulated this example by reading out to West the passage in Livy describing the departure of Regulus, on which he had commissioned a painting. William L. Pressly does not tell us how severely Barry, who grew up in Cork, suffered from such a handicap, but an early biographer said that he knew little Latin and virtually no Greek, using translations and the dictionary to puzzle out the texts; yet he adds that he was extremely well informed in classical learning.

Literary influences apart, the essential training ground for a historical artist was in ancient and Renaissance art. This made a visit to Rome a necessity, and the generosity of Edmund and William Burke enabled Barry to live and study there from 1766 till 1770. Whilst he was in Rome he gave evidence of the quarrelsome and paranoid disposition which would bedevil his whole career. But he was a diligent and reflective student and laid down for himself there the artistic principles

from which he never thereafter deviated. He thought the art of Greek and Roman antiquity superior to any in the modern world, and at its highest when dealing with "the naked". He planned to instil lofty ideals through his painting, in particular by means of ambitious decorative cycles embodying noble and uplifting themes. Furthermore, he was outraged by the claims of Winckelmann and du Bos that the British climate made it impossible for the islands to produce creditable painting, and he resolved to refute them by his own productions and in his writings on art.

His first ambitious composition embodied his dedication to classical tradition. An epigram by Glaucus describes a painting by Parrhasius



James Barry, Self-Portrait c 1802.

which showed the wounded Philoctetes abandoned to his sufferings on the island of Lemnos. Barry set out to re-create this lost work, an "eminent instance of heroic action, or heroic suffering", themes which Reynolds had commended to his students as proper and generally interesting subject-matter. When his subsequent attempt to re-create the painting by Apelles of Venus Anadyomene was exhibited at the Academy in 1772, it led to one of those social disasters to which he was prone, and which caused his increasing alienation from society. He had been denounced as an impostor when he announced that he was the youthful prodigy who had painted "The Baptism of the King of

Cashel", which had met with great success in Dublin in 1763. Now he had the mortification of hearing Horace Walpole laugh derisively as he stood next to the artist in front of his "Venus Rising from the Sea".

There had been previous attempts at large decorative schemes in England: Thornhill's paintings in the dome of St. Paul's, Hogarth's decorations in the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, the Vauxhall Gardens paintings, were all conceived in an expansive vein. Barry's first scheme for six vast religious paintings for St Paul's, to be painted by Academicians, including Reynolds, West and himself, came to nothing through the opposition of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. Their scruples were presumably similar to those which led George III to hesitate before he allowed West to decorate a chapel at Windsor Castle. Remitting the decision to a committee of bishops, he told them, "if it is conceived that I am tacitly bound, as Head of the Church of England, to prevent any such ornaments from being introduced into places of worship; or if it be considered as at all savouring in any degree of a popish practice, however decidedly I may myself think it innocent, I will proceed no further in the business." The bishops tactfully concluded that even a Quaker might contemplate West's proposed subjects with edification.

The frustration of the plan for St Paul's led Barry to undertake single-handed an even more ambitious project. In 1777 he offered to decorate the Great Room of the Society of Arts in the Adelphi with a historical cycle embodying subjects of his own devising. His offer was accepted on the condition that he should paint the vast canvases without fee, the Society undertaking only to buy the materials. Barry's programme traced the progress of civilization in Ancient Greece, from barbarism to the Golden Age, and in contemporary England through the encouragement of trade and manufacture, it culminated in a scene of "Elysium and Tartarus" in which the artist enrolled among the 128 figures of the cleft, Confucius, Ossian, Fénelon, William Mason and Giles Hussey. Despite some absurdities, such as the presence of Dr Burney, in the

"Apotheosis of the Thames", "in company with a party of naked girls dabbled in a horse-pond", the cycle of six paintings treats its humanistic theme with appropriate seriousness and intellectual power. It is one of the most successful schemes of its kind in this country, yet it has remained surprisingly little known.

In defending the British Isles against the charge of philistinism Barry was obliged to rely more on examples from literature than from the visual arts. He admitted that British painting had been artificially depressed by religious taboos. He varied his own exploration of ancient myth with subject-matter drawn from Shakespeare and Milton. His first exhibit at the Royal Academy, intended to sum up the results of his studies in Rome, was an "Adam and Eve" based not on the Bible but on *Paradise Lost*. Even then he cast his interpretation in a classical mould, remarking that "Adam and Eve are figures in the truly Grecian style; they are undecayed, save with their own naked majesty; their beauties result from the superior excellence of their construction." When he embarked upon a series of designs from *Paradise Lost* in the 1790s he was imbued with Edmund Burke's view of Milton as a source of sublime images. The extent to which his concentrated effort to complete the Society of Arts project had sapped his energy is shown by his failure to carry out his full plan. Pressly establishes that only twelve compositions have survived from a more comprehensive list and that of these only two were oil sketches; the remainder were drawings or engravings. But the prints include the "Satan, Sin and Death" in which he achieved a profundity lacking in Hogarth's earlier painting of the same theme.

Foremost amongst the distractions in the last decade of the eighteenth century was his quarrel with the Royal Academy. Elected Professor of Painting in 1782, he soon embarked upon open abuse of the President and of the Academy's policies. Some of his proposals for reform were admirable; for instance, he wanted the Academy to set up a permanent collection of Old Master paintings for the benefit of its students, as a sort of forerunner of the National Gallery. But he was hardly likely to endear himself by hinting

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that Reynolds's studio in Leicester Square was a house of assiduity, and when he published his attacks in an open letter to the Dilettante Society his conduct became too objectionable for a number of his fellow-Academicians. In manoeuvres not conspicuous for the element of natural justice he was not only deprived of his professional chair, but also stripped of his status as Academician. George III, who was apprehensive about the number of Academicians with republican sympathies, took considerable pleasure in annulling his Diploma. But it was manifestly unjust that the decisions should have been taken without Barry having been informed of the charges against him. His few sympathisers, such as Opie, Beechey and Copley, were powerless against the organizing ability of Farington, who deflected Barry and appears in this episode as the real leader of an inner cabal.

It is surprising that there was no concerted protest by Barry's students against his dismissal. They were an obstreperous enough body; so much bread was being thrown about amidst the plaster casts that its issue for rubbing out was a subject in 1796. They had been delighted by Barry's polemics, but the most powerful dissenting voice was unheard at the time, William Blake, in his bitterly critical marginalia on Reynolds's lectures, wrote: "While Sir Joshua was rolling in riches, Barry was Poor and Unemploy'd except by his own energy."

On the face of it Blake's main contention is true. Reynolds taught his students to follow the Grand Style, yet founded his own prosperity upon portrait-painting; Barry followed the path Reynolds advocated, yet could paint only one scheme, and to do so had to forgo material reward. But a closer examination of the facts reveals that the contrast is not quite so stark. The more ambitious portraits of Reynolds, such as "Three Ladies adorning a Terce of Hymns", show him elevating a group portrait into a history painting. Conversely, the genre of Barry's painting which is most accessible to contemporary taste is his portraiture. His plan for the Society of Arts involved his taking or copying a vast number of likenesses. He had already injected a note of originality into the historical group portrait in his "Burke and Barry in the Characters of Ulysses and a Companion fleeing from the Cave of Polyphemus", and had challenged the achievement of the main portrait-painters of his time by the success of his paintings of Barend and Dr. Nugent. Most remarkable of all are his self-portraits, which more than any other aspect of his painting have earned him a place amongst the progenitors of Romanticism. In these autobiographical images, which span his working career, he gives an intimate and moving insight into his introspective, melancholy temperament. He was at pains to blame his later lack of productivity upon the absence of patronage, rather than on his own depression. "Away with the paltry syzyphianic cant respecting that *madde ingratia* which has been ascribed to so many ingenious men..." Instead of idly wondering why Great Men had not done more, we ought rather give thanks to Almighty God, whose good providence had mercifully enabled them to do so much. However, the sad account of his latter days, in which he fell into squalor and self-neglect, leaves no doubt that he suffered from melancholia as well as persecution mania.

William L. Pressly's monograph, which is the latest modern study of Barry to be published, is comprehensively illustrated and contains a full catalogue of his work. In the light of his impressively thorough and accurate survey it is now possible to make an informed judgment of Barry's place amongst late-eighteenth-century British artists, and to assess the relative importance of the different types of art which he practised. Barry himself staked his reputation upon his paintings for the Society of Arts. On these it is relevant to consider the opinion of Benjamin Robert Haydon, whose career bears such an uncanny resemblance to Barry's, both in its pretensions and in its

shortcomings. After seeing the Great Room in the Adelphi in 1842 he wrote in his diary: "There is a grasp of mind there, no where else to be found, as Johnson said, but no colour, no surface, beauty or correct drawing." These defects can all fairly be laid at Haydon's own door, but there is an uncomfortable element of truth in his assessment of Barry's painting technique. Barry seems to have regarded drawing simply as a stage in the planning of his compositions; his designs have little sensitivity or feeling for graphic quality.

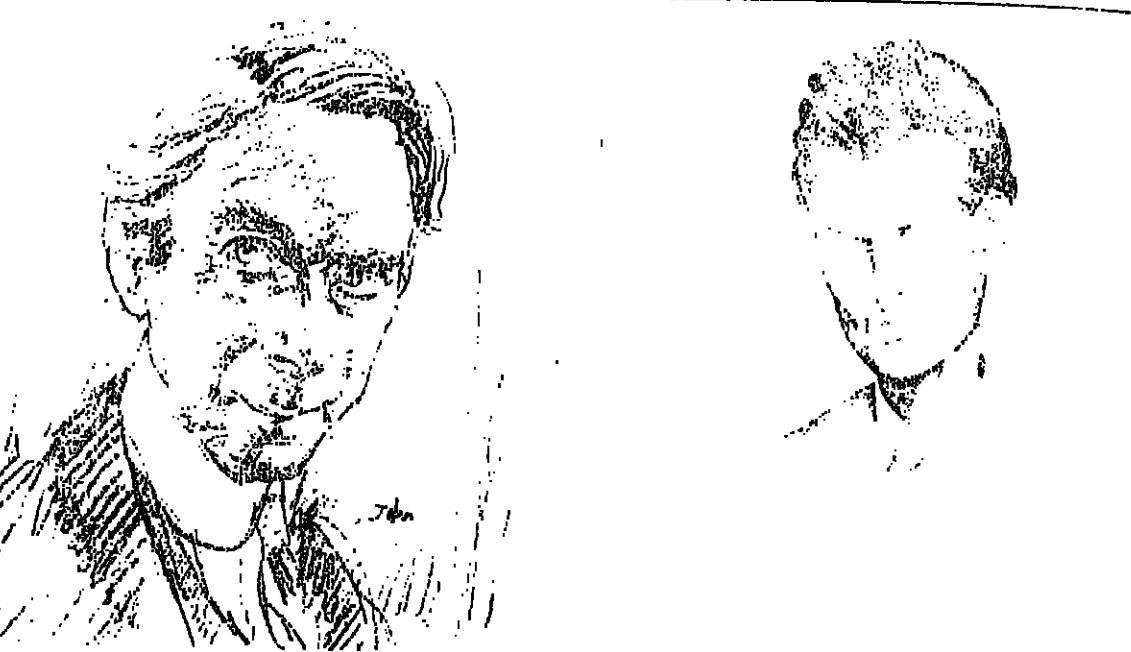
Especially welcome is the attention Pressly devotes to the corpus of prints which, as he rightly remarks, have never received the attention they deserve. They were a vital source of income to Barry whilst he was working at the Adelphi; and since he exhibited so little they were a main vehicle for spreading a knowledge of his compositions amongst a wider public. In them he drew upon his profound knowledge of etching, aquatint and mezzotint to achieve a totally original method of expression, which forms one of the peaks of print-making in the eighteenth century. "These deeply bitten plates, so emphatically printed that they have a surface like a metal rasp, have a rough vigour which transcends the delicate sentimentality of contemporary stipple engraving. They are genuinely original re-creations of compositions he had worked out in other media, and have a graphic quality lacking in his actual drawings."

Barry would not be content with the verdict that he had succeeded primarily as a portrait-painter and print-maker. If this achievement in the field of history painting falls short of the aims he had set himself, the fault must lie partly in his character. The disruptive effects of his aggressive temperament were already so evident in Rome that Burke wrote to caution him: "Your very talents will depart, for want of hope and encouragement, and you will go out of the world fretted, disappointed and ruined." Regarding this prophetic advice, Barry did little on his return to England to counter his potential patrons by his constant coat-trailing, his blunt expressions of opinion, his attacks on the most powerful institutions.

Yet even had he been endowed with a less forthright, more conciliatory personality, it is doubtful whether he could have succeeded at the level he desired. It was not simply his frigid and inhospitable weather that made the British Isles adverse to the grand and heroic style. The climate of taste did not encourage the creation of vast cycles of painting expressing eloquent ideals. Barry was an earlier Hugh Selwyn Mauberly.

He strove... out of key with his time to maintain "the sublime" in the old sense. Wrong from the start.

Later decorative schemes, such as those planned for the new Houses of Parliament in the 1840s and the South Kensington Museum in the 1860s were less successful than Barry's work for the Adelphi. Classical subjects lingered on in the Academy exhibitions of the early nineteenth century, notably amongst the sculptors. But the future lay not with these attempts to revive the Golden Age, but with the painters of domestic sentiment and, above all, with the artists who were breaking new ground in landscape painting. The real revolutionaries of early-nineteenth-century art were Turner and Constable, and Constable saw this with his customary clarity. His assessment of the Neo-Classical movement, and of those who followed Reynolds in his advocacy of the Grand Manner, was curt and dismissive. "West is only hanging on by the tail of the Shirt of Carlo Maratti and the flag-end of the Roman and Bolognese schools—the last of the Altorum Romorum, and only the shadow of them." He felt nothing but contempt for those who preferred "the shaggy posteriors of a satyr to the moral feeling of landscape" and hereby showed himself a better judge than Barry of the direction in which painting was about to proceed.



On November 9 Christie's will be holding a sale of Modern British and Irish Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture (including twenty-two paintings from the studio of the late Algerian Talmage, RA), which may be viewed the four days preceding. Among the various properties to be sold is a red chalk drawing by Augustus John, OM, RA, Russell (1872-1970). John was a campaigner for pacifism, and in the late 1950s his 'beliefs had brought him in contact with Bertrand Russell whose anti-nuclear movement of mass civil disobedience called the Committee of 100 he joined. 'You may count on me to follow your lead,' he assured Russell on 26 September 1960; '... it is up to all those of us above the idiot line to protest as vigorously as possible.' Michael Holroyd, Augustus John: The Years of Experience (London: 1975), p. 189. Another portrait to be sold (among over 300 items) is a pencil drawing (above, right) of Anthony Asquith (1902-68) done in 1932 by Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), the Vorticist painter and author of 'Tarr'. The Childermass and The Apes of God. 'Puffin' Asquith was the film-director son of H. H. Asquith.

## Ignorantly into war

By Samuel Hynes

ALAN BISHOP (Editor):  
Chronicle of Youth  
Vera Brittain's War Diary 1913-1917  
341pp. Gollancz £8.50.  
0 575 02889 2

*Chronicle of Youth* is a selection from Vera Brittain's diary for the years 1913-1917: it recounts her pre-war life in Buxton, her first year at Oxford, her wartime experiences as a nurse, and the death of her fiancé. All of these events will already be familiar to anyone who has read *Testament of Youth*, or has seen the televised version of the book, and one may well ask if it is really necessary to publish the diary separately, especially since *Testament* quotes from it so copiously. During Miss Brittain's own lifetime the answer was a firm "No": she twice tried to find a publisher for selections, but without success. Some reviewers of the present volume have come to the same conclusion, that enough Vera Brittain is enough.

But I think they are wrong, and that the two books are in fact very different. The difference is not simply the difference between raw material and finished product: it might better be described as a difference in mode of narrative. The diary is a young girl's version of her life as a romance, with herself as the romantic heroine (modelled very obviously on Lyndall, in Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, a book that was a kind of sacred text for both Miss Brittain and her soldier-fiancé). It is full of high emotions, and bits of verse, and girlish philosophizing, all put down straight and without irony, as Lyndall herself might have written them. *Testament of Youth*, on the other hand, is history—retrospective, interpretative, and judgmental, and since it is autobiographical history, much concerned to explain and justify, and above all to separate the woman who wrote in 1933 from that earlier self who did the living and the emoting, and was so young and ignorant.

Here is one small example of the difference. In *Testament*, Vera's brother Edward wants to join the army at once in August 1914, but his father forbids it: "having himself escaped immersion in the public-school tradition, which stood for militaristic heroism unimpaird by the damping exercise of reason, he withheld his permission for any kind of military training." Irony, distance, and parody are all at work here. The diary reports the episode in this way: "Daddy was quite angry about the letter being sent to the War Office, but E. said that Daddy, not being a public school man or having had any training,

could not possibly understand the impossibility of his remaining in inglorious safety while others, scarcely older than he, were offering their all." Poor Edward, one thinks, believing such rubbish; poor Daddy, despised by his priggish son; poor Vera, not seeing what she saw twenty years later.

The Vera of the diary appears first, in 1913, as a quite ordinary pre-war provincial eighteen-year-old, fond of dancing, clothes, bridge, and flirtation, but also serious, vain about her own intelligence (which is not in fact all that evident), and rather patronizing toward her family and her town. She is above all ignorant of everything that might have helped her to live through the years to come. "On the way to golf," she writes on March 4, 1913, "I induced Mother to disclose a few points on sexual matters which I thought I ought to know, though the information is always intensely distasteful to me & most depressing—in fact it quite put me off my game!" And sex is not the only area of knowledge in which she is deficient: she seems to have no notion that she might educate herself further at a university, or that she might have a professional career (she writes instead of "literary aspirations"); and she never notices the public world of politics until, on July 25, 1914, she mentions "the European crisis" in a paragraph that begins: "In spite of the showiness of the day, we managed to have our match against Fallowfield."

It is this ordinary, rather dreary girl who blunders ignorantly into life in the diary of the war years. When war is declared, her first reaction is excitement. "That which has been so long anticipated by some & scoffed at by others has come to pass at last—Armageddon in Europe!" And at once her comments on the causes and progress of the war are stuffed with the rhetoric and the clichés of the popular press: "mailed fists" and "torturing hopes for peace" and "terrible retribution." To this non-information she adds rumours: the Serbs have invaded Austria, Francis Joseph is dead. Reading these pages one realizes, sadly, that she and her generation had no chance of coming closer to the truth than that, and that many of them made their decisions and lost their lives without knowing anything about the realities of the war they were in.

Burdened as she was by propaganda and rumour, it is perhaps not so surprising that Vera learned the lessons of war very slowly. In September 1915 she approved when British soldiers smashed the shop of a German hairdresser in Buxton: they were enemy aliens, she thought, and ought to have been interned long ago. And she stuck to the rhetoric of leader-

writers and Rupert Brooke, even when young men she loved were in the trenches; life, she writes, is bare "of all but the few great things which are all we have to cling to now—honour & love and heroism & sacrifice." Her fiancé, Roland Leighton, knew better than that, and wrote against rhetoric from the trenches:

Let him who thinks that War is a glorious golden world, who loves to roll forth stirring words of exhortation, invoking Honour and Praise and Valour and Love of country... let him look at a little pile of sodden grey rags that cover half a skull and a shin bone and what might have been its ribs, or at this skeleton lying on its side... and let him realise how grand & glorious a thing it is to have distilled all Youth and Joy and Life into a foetid heap of hideous putrescence. Who is there who has known and seen who can say that Victory is worth the death of even one of these?

Vera Brittain quotes this letter in *Testament*, and adds: "Had there really been a time, I wondered, when I believed that it was?" The diary shows that indeed there had been a time, and that it had lasted surprisingly long—she is still quoting Rupert Brooke on the last page, the poem about leaving a white unbroken glory. She had learned some things, but she was still in her way ignorant, ordinary, and of her time. The wisdom, such as it was, came later.

But that doesn't matter, for what is valuable in the diary has almost nothing to do with Vera Brittain's individual merit, or her development as a thinking person, but rather with her representativeness, as a young girl living through the moral confusion and the suffering of the First World War, one day at a time. Along the way she offers interesting materials for a social history of her world—pre-war middle-class Buxton, Somerville in 1914, nursing in Camberwell, the customs of a war-time courtship (one kiss after they had agreed to be engaged). But at the centre is the endless and wretchedness of a young woman in love with a man who might die tomorrow, who might even have died yesterday, for a cause that she confusedly still believed in and that he didn't (and who did die pointlessly and without glory, mending barbed wire on a moonlit night at the end of 1915).

Vera Brittain thought that 1939, "with its intense, life-and-death preoccupation with war and peace", might be an appropriate time to publish her diary. Today that preoccupation seems no less intense, and so the time must be equally appropriate—though one can't help adding gloomily that if literature were really an effective instrument against war the world would be at peace by now.

## PHILOSOPHY

L. W. SUMNER:  
*Abortion and Moral Theory*  
246pp. Princeton University Press.  
£10 (paperback), £31.  
0 691 07262 0

Though one still hears jokes about moral philosophers who are expert in the meaning of "ought" but not at all interested in discussions about what we ought to do, such jokes are at last on the decline. It is now quite widely known that philosophers of the English-speaking world write and teach about a wide range of moral problems, including abortion, euthanasia, the use of animals for food and experimentation, racism, sexism, reverse discrimination, the obligations of the rich to the poor, and so on.

What is not so well-known is precisely how moral philosophers contribute to these problems, or—more fundamentally—whether their contributions are achieving anything. After all, one of the reasons those old jokes once were apt is that for many years moral philosophers took it for granted that they could not achieve anything by directing their attention to actual moral problems. The role of the philosopher is not, they used to say, the role of the preacher; and they would deny that there is any such thing as expertise in the field of morality. Perhaps now, after ten years' work by moral philosophers on moral problems, it is time to single out one of the topics on which moral philosophers have worked, and ask for evidence that some progress has been made.

If we are seeking a topic to use as an example for this kind of investigation, the issue of abortion stands out as an obvious choice. It is a controversial public issue, hotly debated among the general community, because what we as a community do about abortion really does matter—to depending on which way you look at it—thousands of unborn children who will be murdered if we continue with our present policies, or thousands of pregnant women who will be denied the freedom to control their own bodies, if we change those policies.

There is another reason why the abortion issue has interested philosophers. It is one in which the ratio of facts in dispute to values in dispute is extremely low. By this I mean that there are relatively few relevant facts about which pro-abortionists and anti-abortionists disagree, and hence relatively more of their disagreement depends on the differing values they hold. In this respect the issue of abortion differs significantly from, say, the issue of nuclear power, where both those in favour of nuclear power and those against it agree on the basic values of avoiding radio-active leaks and preventing terrorists from obtaining nuclear fuel to make bombs with, but disagree on the feasibility of a safe nuclear power industry. (It might be said that the abortion debate is really a dispute over a fact, the issue of fact being whether the foetus is human. I shall soon make it clear why this is a mistake.)

Moral philosophers are not, and obviously cannot be, expert in all the diverse questions raised by issues as diverse as nuclear power, animal experimentation, world hunger, and genetic engineering. If they have any special skills, it must be in the details of moral argument. It is because the abortion dispute is so largely a matter of moral, rather than factual, argument that it provides philosophers with an opportunity to show what they can do. The publication of *Abortion and Moral Theory* by L. W. Sumner provides a suitable occasion for an assessment of the achievements of philosophers in this area, for the book is perhaps the most thorough and clearly set out discussion to date of the major philosophical questions raised by abortion.

In the past ten years the philosophical literature on abortion has

become extensive. Articles have appeared in all the leading journals. One journal, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, has brought together the articles published in its pages into a collection entitled *The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion*. There are other anthologies too, most notably *The Problem of Abortion*, edited by Joel Feinberg, and *Abortion: Pro and Con*, edited by Robert Perkins. Books written by a single author have been less common, but Dan Callahan's *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality*, published in 1970, was an influential early work, especially on the social policy issues.

Though I write as a philosopher myself, and for that reason may be in no position to make a detached assessment, some of these writings have contributed considerably to a clarification of the issues involved. By questioning widely accepted assumptions they have moved the whole question to a different plane. I am prepared to go even further: the philosophical debate has now reached the point at which some widely held views about abortion can be shown to be, by the standards of reasoned argument, untenable.

In the mass media, the crux of the abortion debate is most commonly presented as the question: "When does human life begin?" The chief single merit of the philosophical literature on abortion is that it has shown that this is *not* the question to ask. As Michael Tooley argued in his article "Abortion and Infanticide" (included, in slightly different versions, in both *The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion* and *The Problem of Abortion*) being human—if by this is meant merely being a member of the species *homo sapiens*—cannot be morally decisive. Having a right to life cannot depend on membership of a certain species. It must depend on some morally relevant characteristics possessed by the being. Species is not a morally relevant characteristic, any more than race or sex. Hence the conservative argument that "Human life begins at conception; so abortion is murder" may be based on a premise that is technically true, but the premise fails to support the conclusion. We do not have to admit that every taking of an innocent human life is murder. A life that is human in a genetic sense may still lack the characteristics that make it wrong to take the lives of those who are "human" in a much fuller sense.

Here the question has to be asked: what then is the characteristic that makes it wrong to take a human life? Tooley's answer was bold: self-consciousness, in the sense of the ability to appreciate that one is a living being, with a possible future. Only a being with this ability can desire to continue living, and only a being with such a desire, Tooley claimed, can have a serious right to life.

Every liberal view on abortion must somehow meet the conservative challenge to point to a morally significant difference between the eight-month-old foetus and the newborn baby. Tooley responds to this challenge by agreeing that there is no crucial difference, and nonetheless rejecting the implication the conservative wishes to draw, namely

standards which Plato regarded as a necessity for the possibility of any form of moral life or justice either in the state or the individual. The book continues with chapters on "The Controversy of Convention or Nature as the Basis of the State", "The Inadequacy of Convention as a Basis for Society", "The Education of the Rulers in the Republic" (potential Guardians should display the qualities which would make them "swift, strong, spirited and philosophic"), "The Justice of the State and the Justice of the Individual", "Law in the Republic, Politics and Laws", "The States of the Republic and Laws" and "Plato's Political Heritage".

M.F.

# Conception and misconception

By Peter Singer

that abortion is as wrong as infanticide. Instead Tooley draws the conclusion that, with some qualifications, infanticide is as permissible as abortion.

In *Abortion and Moral Theory* Sumner takes over much of the ground broken by Tooley, but attempts to show that this ground can be held without accepting Tooley's toleration of infanticide. Thus Sumner presents, more thoughtfully than Tooley did, the case against taking the more species membership of the foetus as morally significant. He agrees that what is needed is a characteristic that can clearly be seen to be morally relevant—a "criterion of moral standing", as he calls it. He also agrees with both Tooley and the conservatives that birth will not do as a morally significant dividing line. Yet he is dissatisfied by Tooley's arguments for self-consciousness as the characteristic that makes the difference.

Sumner's alternative criterion is sentience, or the capacity for feeling. This means that to count, morally, a being must at least be capable of experiencing pain or pleasure. Hence not only humans, but also many animals, have moral standing. Sumner believes that the transmission of pain requires a central nervous system, and so he denies moral standing to invertebrate animals; this doubtful contention is made very briefly, and without the supporting argument it would need, but given the topic of his book the omission is understandable.

As soon as we ask this question, we realize that it is simplistic to talk about "the foetus" as if there were a single kind of being from the moment of conception to the moment of birth. In the opening chapters of his book Sumner gives a critical exposition of the abortion debate, an exposition which leads him to the conclusion that both the liberal view and the conservative view are too simple. Their flaw lies precisely in their uniform view of the foetus. We all know that the fertilized egg develops by innumerable gradual stages from a single cell to something that is in effect a human infant, though still inside the womb. Why then, Sumner asks, do both the liberal and the conservative insist that the morality of abortion remains unchanged through all these stages? Would not a reasonable view of abortion be sensitive to the dramatic changes in the nature of the developing form of life?

Sumner's own position falls between the two standard views. In the case of early abortion, before the foetus becomes sentient, Sumner agrees with the liberal that the foetus has no moral standing, and so abortion is permissible. After a brief discussion of the physiological evidence—again perhaps too brief, and this time with less excuse, given the central importance of such evidence in his view—Sumner concludes that the foetus is not sentient until sometime in the second trimester of pregnancy. Thus abortion up until about 14 weeks is, Sumner says, morally indistinguishable from contraception. It prevents the emergence of a new being with moral standing, but does

no wrong to any existing being with a right to life.

A late abortion, on Sumner's view, must be judged differently. It does violate the right to life of a being with moral standing. This does not mean that it is always wrong. The fact that the being is parasitic upon the pregnant woman makes abortion easier to justify than infanticide still, it takes a serious reason, for example a threat to the woman's physical or mental health, to justify it. Sumner recommends a case-by-case approach as the only way to decide when a reason is serious enough to justify a late abortion.

Sumner presents his view not only as a middle way that avoids the crude simplifications of the alternative positions, but also as a view that can be derived from a sound ethical theory. His theory is a form of utilitarianism, and he spends the last two chapters of his book explaining why utilitarianism is the moral theory we should prefer, and why his position on abortion is the position to which his form of utilitarianism leads us.

Taken as a whole, Sumner's discussion serves both to correct some of the errors of the popular debate about abortion, and to deepen our understanding of the theoretical issues that lie behind it. It can therefore serve as the kind of evidence philosophers need if they are to show that their change of direction toward applied ethics has been worthwhile, and that they do have a distinctive contribution to make to the discussion of controversial moral issues.

All the same, Sumner's book is not going to be the last word on abortion; no one familiar with this debate, or with philosophy for that matter, would expect it to be. Sumner leaves some important questions

unanswered. For instance, while it is easy to see why the capacity of the developed foetus to feel pain would matter if a painful procedure were to be inflicted on it, would this capacity matter so much if the abortion could be carried out in a manner which did not cause the foetus to suffer? Is Sumner's argument against a late abortion really an argument only against those methods of abortion which cause the foetus to suffer? Sumner appears not to take his argument in this way, but perhaps as a utilitarian he should.

Moreover there is another, even more perplexing issue on which Sumner does not quite satisfy the inquiring reader. He says that an early abortion is morally no different from contraception, and makes this claim quite convincing. Now most of us—unless we are orthodox Roman Catholics—regard contraception as not morally wrong at all, and so Sumner's equation of contraception and abortion leads us to think about early abortion in the same light. But should a utilitarian take this view of contraception? Or should he, aiming to maximize the total happiness, think it desirable to produce as many beings as possible, as long as they can be happy without detracting more from the happiness of others than the total sum of their own happiness? To the ordinary reader aware of the population problems which reveal the economic downside of applied moral philosophy; but it cannot be ignored by philosophers familiar with the baffling questions raised by asking whether we should consider the happiness of those possible future beings we could, if we so chose, bring into existence. I doubt that this latter section of Sumner's audience will be content with his discussion of these questions.

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In 1982 Oscar Wilde arrived in New York for a lecture tour he hoped would allow him to "gather the golden fruits of America". Having nothing to declare but his genius, he had the effrontery to think that more than enough; in exchange for the aesthetic refinement he brought them, he expected the Americans to shower him with financial favours. Which as it turned out they did, the press playing down to him almost before he stepped off the boat (he was reported to be "disappointed with the Atlantic Ocean") and the public paying heavily to get a glimpse of him. Since then a whole fleet of English writers have followed in his wake, disembarking for their tending tours with no less immodest ambitions. Hugo Williams, almost a century after Wilde, is the latest of them, and *No Particular Place to Go* recounts his travels from New York up to Toronto down to Houston over to San Francisco and all the way back to Go.

Acutely conscious of his travelling predecessors, Williams gleefully undermines conventional wisdom about the States being a lap of luxury for English writers. Wilde dressed dandyish for his addresses, humping a trunk about so that he could adorn himself in velvets and furs; Williams travels light, cramming most of what he needs into his pockets and eventually disposing of his vomit-stained leather jacket in a Coney Island trash-can. Aldous Huxley welcomed the drugs and oriental religions of California as a cleansing of the doors of perception; Williams simply takes the drugs, using them to supplement the oblivion brought on by booze, and gratefully observing the heaps of marijuana that lie around on table-tops "as if someone had just mowed the lawn". Auden sat in one of the dives on Fifty-Second St., "uncertain and afraid"; Williams seems to visit every bar, night-club and clip-joint in the land, but rather than brooding on "the unmentionable odour of death" devotes himself to the pursuit of bar-hoosers, girl singers, prostitutes and masscuses. When a man sitting next to him in the Connaught remarks (as if he'd stepped out of Auden's poem) "My life's falling apart", Williams refuses the chance to show an affirming flame of friendship and snaps back "No, it isn't".

Fame is the last thing the tour brings Williams's way: it's hard enough even to get himself correctly identified. Constantly taken for a Canadian, he hears his name being pronounced over the phone. "Sugar Williams" and sees a poster introducing him as "editor of the New Review". The fifty copies of his latest book sent self-promotingly

ahead to El Paso are mysteriously mislaid, and it's no real consolation to him when the bookshop manager there offers instead to silk-screen one of his poems onto pillowcases "for the teenage market". The audiences at his readings gather together in their twos and threes, on one occasion in a room so small that the event is disrupted by the entry of a girl who wants to make coffee at the back of the room. The Toronto reading clashes with Marshall McLuhan "holding out his death-of-the-word tidings elsewhere on campus"; in San Francisco his performance is gate-crashed by a postgraduate student who insists on reading his translations of Hafiz; at Charlottesville Irvin Ehrenpreis approaches him afterwards and asks him to come to a poetry class next morning - "Was I that bad?" he asked.

Nobody, it seems, is interested in his work: they're too busy pressing their own manuscripts into his hands ("Lines like 'staid phenomena uprooted the chinchilla patch all right' sent me groping for my iced water") or singing the praises of Clayton Esheleman (misspelled throughout as "Eshelmann"). There's a brief moment of glory in Boston when a man praises him for "attempting the long poem": Williams has neglected to read out the titles to his short lyrics. When he is finally recognized it's by a Lake Charles bank clerk whose son once attended one of Williams's poetry courses in London - "He's never been the same since that trip... He went to a monastery, I don't know if you knew, after that course of yours". Williams draws his hundred dollars hastily and gets back on the bus.

It's one of the few moments in the book when we see him with money in his hands: for the rest of the time fortune is even harder to come by than fame. He knows, of course, of the riches to be made from lecturing trips: "A friend of mine tours America almost constantly, lecturing on, and committing, 'Adultery'. Another reads out his thesis on 'The Blurb'. I heard of a man who got \$35,000 from the government for a single talk on Clearasil." But his own experience is of petty quibbles over fees, demands for receipts before expenses can be paid, or promises of cheques to be forwarded to England in due course. He travels not gracefully but by Greyhound, those buses on which you confess your innermost secrets to strangers and wake with adjoining passengers asleep on your lap. He mixes not with the rich and famous, nor even with Faculty Deans and their wives, but with a stream of bums and drifters. He stays at the seediest hotels, in rooms where the air-conditioner takes the clean air out and pumps dirty air in and where you have to keep your shoes on for fear of catching something between your toes. Or else he telephones the friends of friends of friends who've found their way into his address book and pleads with them to put him up.

They mostly do, women especially. For *No Particular Place to Go* is a sexual odyssey as well as a Grand Tour, with a lady at every port-of-call and not a few in-between. Here too Williams's book is a grotesque parody of the legend of sexual excess which Dylan Thomas and others established. Williams has his experiences all right, and they run to double figures, but what a glum record of stanching pleasure or outright failure they turn out to be: Maggie ("a forty yard dash followed by three hicups and it was all over"), Denise ("breasts like cannonballs... the much talked about silicone substitute"), Why-Me? ("sex with Why-Me? was like life in the Middle Ages: nasty, brutish and short"), Su-Su (vibrator), Ricky (ditto), Dina (obsession with vaginal deodorants), Sharon (interrupted by her parents), June (interrupted by her friends), Lorie-Lee (interrupted by telephone), and Paula (interrupted by his desire to pee). It's only with Vicky, a New York girl, that he has a relationship lasting more than twenty-four hours; but this one too proves a

drag: "She seemed to have slept with every author on her course. Every time I tried to get on top of her, William Styron or someone would come between us. Even death seemed to pose no barrier to her intimate knowledge of man." In this frantically promiscuous country, even passing landscapes seem sexually active - "Scrapped automobiles mount one another in desperate copulation", there are "sporn-flecked crowds", "see-saw oil-wells look like bending Dutch land-girls in white hats and pants".

The sexual comedy of Williams's book is announced, of course, in its title, a Chuck Berry song about a man whose amorous intentions in an automobile are farcically denied - "Can you imagine the way I felt? I couldn't unfetter her safety belt." Chuck Berry's contribution to the book goes beyond this theme and that of aimless travel: Williams has written a homage to him and to the values his music celebrated. Williams indeed goes to see him perform in Long Island, an occasion which chasteningly reminds him that the age of Berry has passed ("to these kids he's just another old-time rocker, a figure of fun"). This does not, however, deter him from consuming as much Rock 'n' Roll and Rhythm 'n' Blues as America can offer. He's scornful of newer musical fashions there (Blue Grass reminds him of "heavy Caledonian Society dances at school"), takes care to visit famous musical locations like Nashville, Phoenix, Memphis, and MacArthur Park, and ends up with his beloved English band, Dr Feelgood, like some Odysseus returning to his Penelope. Even the structure of Williams's book - chapters divided into headed sections like an LP with its individual tracks - has its basis in rock music.

For those who know Hugo Williams only through his poetry (there was an earlier travel book, *All the Time in the World*), *No Particular Place to Go* will come as a surprise. For although the poetry likes to dramatize its creator as a drifter, "sporn drying on his thigh" as he moves on to another town, it hasn't exactly been renowned for its humour: Williams has been a kind of sad heart in the supermarket, he was always on the brink of shedding prosaic tears. Prose has allowed him to find new satirical powers; whether directed against fashions in interior design ("Vicky's bed was on a shelf up near the ceiling of a smart open-plan studio"), or against fringe theatre ("I wondered if an audience was allowed to go home if it found itself outnumbered by the actors"), or against himself. There are many hilarious vignettes as Williams makes his down-and-out way through "B-movie, back-lot America", sending home Marlin picture postcards (factories and industrial plants "scattered haphazardly beside the river as if a child had left his things out to rust") and offering useful tips for tourists as if compiling an "alternative" *Podro's Guide* ("when gate-crashing in New York always say you were invited by Mrs Cohen").

But there is also something wayward and fragmented about the book that, although poetry clearly has a continuous relation with history, the precise terms of that relation are infinitely complex and not susceptible to easy reduction. Literary kinds, Toliver argues, exist in a carnivalesque relation to mundanity, creating a genuine time out which obeys its own laws, but in which the mundane is recalled. He begins by contrasting Donne's reference of incident to a logical, dynamic view of time with Yeats's myth of cyclical recurrence, a time with neither end nor, significantly, a beginning. Beginnings are important to the next stage of Toliver's progress, where he argues that Renaissance poets could begin by inserting themselves into a myth of initiation embodied in the Muse, through whom they had access to the collective past of genre, whereas poets since Wordsworth have had to refer to a personal past in which the seeds of their



Sir Galahad, the Oxford journal with which Louis MacNeice was closely involved. The cover was designed by John R. Hilton and the issues are part of a collection of Louis MacNeice's poems, letters and literary journals, most of which date from 1924-36, bought from Mr Hilton in 1980 and forming one of many gifts to the Bodley's American Friends, now celebrating twenty-five years of transatlantic benefaction with a silver jubilee appeal and meetings in Chicago, Boston, New York and California. Details of membership and publicity material can be obtained from the Secretary, Bodley's American Friends, The Bodleian Library, Oxford OX1 3BG.

vided between Thom Gunn and Philip Larkin, both of whom are mentioned in the book. Williams idolizes the cool, leather-jacketed Gunn as someone who made it early to the States, and he sets off to see him in San Francisco (the episode ends in typical frustration). Larkin stands at the other extreme, having once sent Williams a postcard questioning the whole point of travel: "I left the UK for four days in 1951. I think it was; before that it would be 1937. Don't you miss the cricket scores?"

Travel, Hugo Williams briskly ripostes at one point, "is a test to the imagination". Certainly his own imagination is vigorously engaged here, to the extent that we suspect he may be making things up. We can be-

lieve, if we like, that he met a man who had fitted his camper out like an Oriental Rose Garden, or saw a girl on a swing poke out of a first-floor window, or cured himself of crabs by reading a Thom Gunn poem which recommends the use of "A200" in such circumstances. But we'd be wise to take at least some of the book with a pinch of salt: like Clive James's, these are unreliable memoirs that throw a good portion of fiction in among the fact. Whether Hugo Williams will now take his place among those writers who have won academic prestige by radically challenging our notions of the fictive is more doubtful. But he deserves to be read as an inventor as well as documenter, a writer who has made the most of not making good in America.

## Carnival time

By Lachlan MacKinnon

HAROLD TOLIVER:  
The Past that Poets Make  
252pp. Harvard University Press.  
£16.80.  
0 674 65676 8

Early in this study Harold Toliver cites Althusser as pointing the way to an examination of poetry's mysterious relation to time. Althusser's emphasis on the relative autonomy

of culture is useful to Professor Toliver in sustaining his argument that, although poetry clearly has a continuous relation with history, the precise terms of that relation are infinitely complex and not susceptible to easy reduction. Literary kinds, Toliver argues, exist in a carnivalesque relation to mundanity, creating a genuine time out which obeys its own laws, but in which the mundane is recalled. He begins by contrasting Donne's reference of incident to a logical, dynamic view of time with Yeats's myth of cyclical recurrence, a time with neither end nor, significantly, a beginning.

Beginnings are important to the next stage of Toliver's progress, where he argues that Renaissance poets could begin by inserting themselves into a myth of initiation embodied in the Muse, through whom they had access to the collective past of genre, whereas poets since Wordsworth have had to refer to a personal past in which the seeds of their

genius lie dormant. Generic distinction, it is implied, declines because the modes of access to it have vanished. He is particularly interesting on the contrast between Keats's habitual "phantomized past," where the snowstorm into which the lovers of "The Eve of St Agnes" vanish seems to hold them in the stasis of the Grecian urn, and the insistent presentness of the details of "To Autumn". He might, however, go further, for the relation "To Autumn" has with its reader is precisely that which the urn had to the poet; it is a fulfilment rather than a repudiation.

Toliver is also interesting about Milton, whom he reads as referring himself deliberately to the absolute beginning of the Creation in order to structure the time within which his poem is written. By contrast, he offers a rare and thoughtful reading of Richard Wilbur as a modern to whom ordinary time can offer only hints of a past which is intermittently formal. The reader's regard for Wilbur is increased, which is a valuable achievement.

This book, then, has many excellences, but it is disappointing overall. Had Toliver organized his material differently, he might have seen that what he is telling is a familiar story, the progressive fragmentation of the modern world as its metaphysical and cultural supports are removed. He does not explain or argue that, central to his argument, and we are left with a number of valuable paragraphs which deserve a more cogent framework.

# Human nature's daily food

By Claire Tomalin

BETH DARLINGTON (Editor):  
My Dearest Love  
Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth 1810  
With a foreword by Jonathan Wordsworth

81pp. Published in facsimile by the Trustees of Dove Cottage, printed by The Scolar Press, distributed by Blackwell Rare Books, Oxford.  
£215 until January 1, 1982, thereafter £450.

The letters reproduced in facsimile in the pages of this beautiful and costly book are seven exchanged between William Wordsworth and his wife Mary in July and August 1810. They were found, together with some other Wordsworth family papers, in the summer of 1977, in the famous salvage sack that appeared mysteriously at the door of a Carlisle dealer in postage stamps, who paid five pounds for the lot. They were then bought by the Trustees of Dove Cottage, who decided to issue them in a limited edition in this exquisite format, on hand-made Italian paper and in six-colour reproduction, allowing a wonderful subtlety to the ink blots and smudges produced by haste and time. There are transcriptions but no notes: a later volume, at a more ordinary price, will be annotated by Beth Darlington, who transcribed the letters and wrote the Introduction for this one.

Until now the letters have not been generally available; scholars have had a chance to glimpse them, but no more, and Hunter Davies was able to quote only briefly from them in his recent biography of the poet. So there is a distinct sense of occasion and revelation here, even if it is not quite as sensational or important as the "discovery" of Annette Vallon in the 1920s. Beth Darlington claims indeed that there are two revelations, one being that of Wordsworth's intense and passionate love for his wife, the other of Mary Wordsworth's "intelligence, energy and imagination".

There is no doubt about the first. All commentators until now, from Coleridge to Mary Moorman, have assumed that Wordsworth's feeling for his wife was sedate, sober and unheroic. Clearly this was a wrong assumption. Wordsworth guarded his emotional privacy from other eyes, but in these letters he declares himself unable to enjoy the world when separated from Mary, and breaks out with phrases such as "I am giddy at the thought of seeing thee once more."

In a most moving and absolutely characteristic passage he recalls the "spot time" in June 1797 when the young Mary Hutchinson, after spending the spring with Dorothy and him, left them. "It" writes Wordsworth thirteen years later, she

taken the road through Bristol when you left Racecourse; in which case I should certainly have accompanied you as far as Bristol; or further, perhaps; and then I thought, that you would not have taken the coach at Bristol, but that you would have walked on Northwards with me at your side, till unable to part from each other we hills which skirt the road for so many miles, and thus continuing our journey. I fancied that we should have seen so deeply into each other's hearts, and been so fondly locked in each other's arms, that we should have braved the worst and parted no more. Under that tree, I thought as I passed along we might have rested, of that stream might have drank, in that thicket we might have hidden ourselves from the sun, and from the eyes of the passenger; and thus did I feed on the thought of that bliss that might have been, which would have been intolerable from the force of regret had I not felt the happiness which waits me

when I see you again. O Mary I love you with a passion of love which grows till I tremble to think of its strength...

Wordsworth, more than most, lived in time past and time future; he wished the letters to be preserved so that whichever died first the other would have a written record of their mutual devotion. Yet he would certainly not have wished us to read them; and there is a touch of uneasiness, even now, about eavesdropping on some of the private phrases in these letters. Conjugal intimacy must always be a little repellent to the outsider, however comfortable for the two involved.

Mary's response to William's passionate words is surprised, humble, adoring and gratified:

so unexpected - so new a thing to see the breathing of thy inmost heart upon paper that I was quite overpowered... I am so agitated and my eyes are so bedimmed that I scarcely know how to proceed - I have brought my paper, after having laid my baby upon thy sacred pillow... relief, she then plunges into telling about her many domestic concerns, servant problems, the weather, and (later) how Aggy Ashburner in the village is pregnant "without any hope of being made an honest woman of" (no thought of Annette staying her pen at this point). Energy Mary certainly possessed; intelligence, yes on the whole; imagination, perhaps not.

But her account of life at Allan Bank, the large, ugly Grasmere house (Wordsworth had once called it a "temple of abomination") with its perpetually smoky chimneys and hayfields outside, is immediately appealing. She writes fluently and vividly, so that we feel the pace of her life and see the servant maids, ungratefully bored with working the dull Wordsworths, and always being ill. The fine folks at the church stile" give Mary what she suspects of being a condescending look; another as she runs through the summer rain, conscious that "my White Stockings & petticoat looked so ridiculous from under the short blue cloak". Wordsworth was irked by the "fine folks"; and took a considerable interest in her clothes and appearance.

Mary did not lack spirit, indeed she asserted it:

I am at this moment as well, and to my own feelings have as much Life, spirit and activity about me as when I was 20 years of age - tis true I am losing my teeth & my hair is becoming grey - these, the two great ornaments my Youth had to boast of, (my hair especially) I prized, because thou once ventured to speak in admiration of it) I must own are upon the wain - else I think I am as good as ever.

When these letters were exchanged, William and Mary had been married for eight years and all five of their children had been born. The youngest, William, is the baby Mary describes carrying about in her arms while she supervises the haymaking, brought to her bed to be fed at night, or sleeping in his cradle on the sofa in the study where she sits during rainstorms beside a "flapping" fire and watches a chirping chick in the grate, fetched in by the elder children to be nursed. Of the other children we hear most of Catherine, who has been very ill and left with a slight paralysis of one arm and leg; her mother describes her as "the arrantest Mischief", eternally jealous of William's place on her lap, deserving of frequent "whipping" and, being left-handed, subject (poor mite) to having the left hand tied to prevent her using it.

John, the eldest, asks importantly "but how soon Mother?" when she says their father will soon be home. Dora wishes to be a butterfly - there were large numbers at Grasmere that summer - so as to do "whatever she had a mind"; and Tom is called a

whiner, and reluctant to go to school. Two years later first Catherine and then Tom would die and be mourned with a grief that found its chief expression in their aunt Dorothy's letters, but also in Wordsworth's beautiful sonnet "Surprised by joy - impatient as the Wind I turned to share the transport - Oh! with whom

But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb

But for the moment, the children seem to be safe and the Wordsworths to be settling into comfortable, happy middle age. Perhaps Wordsworth's passion for Mary was all the greater because, as he tells her, she sees so few other couples enjoying the same happiness: gratitude can be a part of passion. And the contrast with his closest friend, Coleridge, who had been their guest for so long, estranged from his wife and hopelessly in love with Mary's sister Sara, cannot have been missed.

The thought of Coleridge must have been often in Wordsworth's mind during the period of these letters, for they were occasioned by his visit to his patrons, Sir George and Lady Beaumont, in their country house at Coleorton, Leicestershire; and it was Coleridge who had introduced Wordsworth's poetry, and then the poet himself, to them in 1803, when Lady Beaumont declared herself ready to "fall at his feet". (Indeed the Beaumonts had purchased and given a small estate, Applethwaite, to Wordsworth, to enable him to build a house and live near Coleridge.) And the latter part of Wordsworth's trip took him to his brother and sister-in-law, Tom and Sara Hutchinson, in Wales: how could Sara fail to remind him of the friend who, only three months before, had been living at Allan Bank?

Both Sara and then Coleridge had shared and then left the Wordsworths' home. Coleridge was never to return. In the autumn of the same year, when Wordsworth's remarks about his drunkenness were repeated back to him, the estrangement that was never properly healed took place.

There are two references to Coleridge in these letters. One is by Mary, reporting a conversation with their neighbour Charles Lloyd:

LI, also repeated some lies that C. had told him, but which I did not notice sufficiently to report particularly, about a metaphysical work that he had sent to the press & about a long letter which he had written to him - neither of which had ever been done to any person's knowledge - he must be, as LI, says, insane -

Wordsworth's own reference is terser; it is simply to "C - whom I hope will not be returned". But this is only a sad confirmation of what even Dorothy had written in April of their once deeply loved friend: "We have no hope of him. None that he will do anything more than he has already done."

As a letter writer, Wordsworth has nothing like Byron's dash or Keats's profound intelligence. There is often something almost dogged about his approach. Yet, as the poetry also shows, doggedness does not exclude intensity. And Mary, while she emerges as a good woman and a woman of character, is not an enchantress. It does not matter. There is no way of knowing whether Wordsworth would have written better poetry in later life without his domestic comforts, as Coleridge seems to have thought. Clearly he and Mary, marrying late, felt a passionate gratitude for their shared happiness, and were determined to protect it from disruption either by difficult household inmates (such as Coleridge) or by prolonged separations. It would be a very cool reader who could turn unmoved from this unexpected glimpse into the lives and hearts of the poet and his chosen "creature not too bright and good/For human nature's daily food."

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COLLINS



# Trapped on history's wheel

By Blair Worden

PAULINE GREGG:  
King Charles I  
449pp. Dent. £12.50.  
0 460 04437 0

One is surprised to find a biography of Charles I done at all. Pauline Gregg has done it well. At every stage she has faced large and complex problems of organization and interpretation. Charles's youthful development has to be gleaned from discrete and grudging evidence. The 1630s - the years when he reached adulthood, assumed the crown and quarrelled with his early parliamentarians - are in historiographical disarray. In the 1630s, the decade of personal rule, the King's decorous but dull court became isolated from the nobles and intellectuals who might have written revealingly about it. The intricate chronology of the 1640s, as many historians have discovered, is a biographer's graveyard. Charles's behaviour from the meeting of the Short Parliament in 1640 to his execution in 1649 deserves a book to itself. Miss Gregg is nothing daunted. Her reading is wide; her prose is clear; her narrative, although often derivative, is sound and compelling. If there are understandable signs of tiredness towards the end, her head remains above the water. Specialists will find much with which to quibble, but none of them has tried to write the long and substantial account of Charles's life and reign which has long been wanting. Miss Gregg has written it.

Much about Charles will always be unknown. Much will always be unattractive. Miss Gregg does not shirk his weaknesses: his aloofness; his capacity for imperiousness and for vindictiveness; his untrustworthi-

ness in negotiation (although this was merely a strategic error, not a sin: his leading parliamentary opponents were at least as unscrupulous as he was, and much cleverer); his ostentatious loyalty to politicians who earned hatred by their loyalty to him. Yet Charles, who in the service of neat explanation has often been taken for a knave or a fool, was neither. Miss Gregg traces with shrewd perception the formation of a personality which was flawed from birth and which was damaged by a sickly, backward childhood, but which came to acquire a substantial measure of grace and sympathy. In his early years he was overshadowed by his elder brother Henry and his elder sister Elizabeth, those pin-ups of European Protestantism to whose cause he was to devote himself so rashly in the 1620s. Later, in his delayed adolescence, he was overshadowed by the Duke of Buckingham. After Buckingham's death, however, he began to discover his own strength.

The Charles of the personal rule, familiar to us as a remote aesthete, appears here instead as an energetic ruler who mastered the machinery of government (even if he did too little to reform it). Miss Gregg presents him as a promoter of economic and social reforms, an advocate of national self-sufficiency, and a consistent defender of the underprivileged. Her case, a not entirely novel one, might have been made more fully, but it is certainly true that many of the ambitious Cromwellian policies of the 1650s can be seen in embryo in the 1630s. Until the Scottish war, the personal rule was the happiest and most successful period of Charles's life. Even so, the peaceful diplomacy on which non-parliamentary government depended came unnaturally to him. He never lost his youthful and restless appetite for action and adventure. The Civil

War, for all its tribulations, offered a welcome release. In arms he displayed courage and comradeship. By the time of Charles's captivity, which she memorably describes, Miss Gregg has established grounds for a dignified pathos.

The pathos is legitimate, but a price is paid for it. By the end of this biography Charles has become a victim, trapped on the wheel of history, vindicting a helpless right, with "no aptitude for presiding over the birth of a new society". Yet the bulk of the book suggests what the half-hearted determinism of its concluding paragraphs appears to deny: that under monarchies the fates of nations (as well as the relations between them) are dependent on the personalities and the private lives of monarchs. That is the point of writing biographies of them. Contemporaries did not think Charles doomed to failure, and I doubt whether many historians now do so either. It is his methods, not his policies, that seem unworkable. (At least, that is so in England. It may not be so in Scotland and Ireland, the countries which brought his ruin, and on which Miss Gregg is not strong.) If the future seemed to belong anywhere in the earlier seventeenth century it was not to the "parliamentary sovereignty" and to the "Whig supremacy" to which Miss Gregg tentatively looks forward, but to European absolutism.

Miss Gregg's hesitation at this point exposes the understandable but regrettable boundaries of her ambition, and prompts the reservations which must accompany the praise her book deserves. Wide as her curiosity is, it does not consistently extend to the facts of political power or to the workings of political institutions. Excellent when she can perceive the King's actions as the public projections of private feelings, she does not always grasp the competition of interest groups with which he had to contend. The last few years have produced some uncommonly interesting and controversial work, principally by Conrad Russell and by his followers and critics, on the poli-

tical groupings and arguments of the 1620s and 1630s. Most of this literature appears in Miss Gregg's enormous (and erratic) bibliography, but she does not seem to have absorbed much of it. Not all of it is readily digestible, and some of it has no doubt appeared inconveniently late in the day. Even so, a biographer with a keen nose for politics would have welcomed the opportunity presented by recent writing for a major reassessment of the King's role.

The book's treatment of religion shows the inevitable limitations as well as the virtues of a biography whose author finds the King more interesting than the kingdom. As usual Miss Gregg is good on Charles's inner sentiments. She understands that he disliked bigots, whether papist or puritan, and had no wish to pry into men's doctrinal sympathies. She is perceptive about his private relationship with Archbishop Laud, for whom he felt respect but not warmth. But no one could understand from this book the depth of insecurity and of anger which Charles's ecclesiastical policies aroused. Miss Gregg brings out the King's Erastianism and his belief that "as the church can never flourish without the protection of the crown, so the dependency of the Church upon the Crown is the chief support of the royal authority." Yet Charles brought church and crown down together. The churchmen he promoted, and the power he gave them, threatened the balance between church and state which had been maintained since 1559. So long as the royal supremacy was presented as a counterweight to papal pretensions abroad and to clerical pretensions at home, it gave the monarchy vital strength and support. Charles's politically disastrous patronage of Arminian clericalism is a puzzle which this book does nothing to resolve.

If Charles's ecclesiastical aims remain elusive, so does his political creed. Divine right was a belief which he "learned from his father" and which "he carried with him to his dying day, so implicitly that he never felt the need to enunciate it in

so many words". As far as it goes, that is fair enough. Charles was never an intellectual as his father had been, and his often gratuitous assertions of his prerogative may be explicable more by inherited assumptions and by a psychological struggle for self-conviction than by any firm grasp of political theory. Yet Charles had ample opportunity, and in his dealings with his parliaments ample necessity, to reflect on the scope and the purpose of monarchical power. I wish Miss Gregg had expanded her tantalizing references to Charles's annotations of books and manuscripts. She believes the King to have been influenced by some collected aphorisms of Guicciardini; and while she seems to me to strain the evidence, Charles's relationship to the "politic history" which developed in his lifetime might well repay reflection. So, I suspect, might the interest he displayed in the 1640s in the histories by Davila and d'Aubigné of the French Wars of Religion. It seems possible that if Charles had a model in the last years of his life it was not his father, who had at best earned mixed feelings from him, but his father-in-law, Henri IV, who out of civil war had restored peace and erected absolutism.

When an author has worked as hard as Miss Gregg, it is a pity to have to grumble about the system of references which she and her publisher have adopted. It is maddeningly difficult, and at times impossible, to locate her sources. That is not a purely pedantic complaint, for in her accounts of Charles's feelings and judgments the dividing line between intelligent speculation and demonstrable assertion is frequently invisible. The space occupied by her scholarly apparatus could have been used more informatively and more reassuringly.

So this is not an ideal biography of Charles I. But it is much the best we have. It excludes C. V. Wedgwood's trilogy, which is both something more and something less than a biography. If it is widely read it will be widely enjoyed.

## Caroline weathercock

By Kevin Sharpe

ROY E. SCHREIBER:  
The Political Career of Sir Robert Naunton 1589-1635

190pp. Royal Historical Society/Swift Books. £15.40.  
0 901050 79 2

Although Sir Robert Naunton held two important offices - that of Secretary of State from 1618 to 1621, and Master of the Court of Wards from 1624 to 1635 - he was not noted, as a man of business, for anything other than competence. He investigated no administrative revolution, nor was he involved in any major scandal. Even in the building of his personal fortune, Naunton was not one of the more conspicuous beneficiaries of a career at court and in office. Yet Roy E. Schreiber's unravelling of his career has proved more than worthwhile. For though Naunton, indeed because Naunton, was not a figure of greater forcefulness and renown, we may learn from his career much about the early Stuart political world and the place of King James I in it.

Naunton was a weathercock of the changing winds of faction. He obtained the secretaryship in 1618 thanks to the patronage of Villiers, to whom he was related, and to the need, for a secretary of known anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish inclinations, as a counterweight to the senior secretary, Sir Thomas Lake. Dealing with the Venetian, Dutch and Protestant German ambassadors, Naunton endeavoured to build a

coalition to offset the power of the Habsburgs. He rose to his greatest influence in 1621 as a leading organizer of the anti-Spanish groups at court, promoting a parliament and persuading the King to appoint a council of war as preparations for conflict. He was suspended from office the same year as a gesture to the Spanish envoy Gondomar, when James I declared openly his commitment to a Spanish match. A change of foreign policy in 1624 saw Naunton rescued from disgrace and retirement and promoted to the Mastership of the Court of Wards, but his relationship with the new king, Charles I (not least on account of their religious differences), was never close. The death of Buckingham and the re-establishment of peace with Spain after 1629 effectively ended his career.

It was a career which, as Schreiber well shows, illustrates the underestimated political skills of James I. James, it would seem, quite consciously balanced and divided his administration, especially the conduct of foreign affairs. Because each secretary dealt with ambassadors from countries with which he had some sympathy, a communication was established which enabled intelligence to be obtained and (sometimes false) information to be conveyed without suspicion. The King alone knew the complete picture. So, in 1621, Naunton was so much in evidence because James wanted the Habsburgs to think that he was moving away from them. He was suspended because the anti-Spanish programme was not the King's main policy but a device to force Spain's hand. "When it failed to produce the desired results, it was abandoned and Sir Robert with it." Through

Schreiber's account we see more clearly than before the relationship of office and factional change to the subtle flexibility of James's conduct of policy.

After 1621, however, the narrative becomes sketchy and the analysis less satisfactory. The dilemma facing Naunton as an MP, courted by the anti-Spanish interest and yet still hopeful of restoration to royal favour, is not worked out. His parliamentary career from 1621 requires fuller treatment than is given here and needs to be integrated with his career at court if we are properly to understand Naunton as a politician or early Stuart factional alignments in general. Statements about the nature of court politics in 1629 are simplistic and at times incorrect. The Caroline court in the 1630s was by no means the exclusive Arminian enclave depicted here. Some of these problems arise from what appears to be a neglect of important recent studies. For in a work so thoroughly based on primary sources it is surprising how little use is made of, and how little use is made of, the findings of scholars of Raleigh, Russell and Zaller for instance, who have so valuably illuminated the 1620s. Because Naunton's late career is briefly treated we unfortunately never appreciate the work for which he is best known, the *Fragmenta Regalia*, not fully understood how that work (evidently written in the 1630s) reflects his experience.

But, at its best, Schreiber's Naunton demonstrates how much can be learned about the little-studied early Stuart court from the career of one man. It is a salutary reminder that the politicians of second rank should not be neglected.

# Making a meal of it

By Harold Beaver

MICHAEL BARRY GOODMAN:  
Contemporary Literary Censorship  
The Case History of Burroughs's  
*Naked Lunch*  
330pp. Methuen. New Jersey:  
Scarecrow Press.  
0 8108 1398 X

"Glug, Glug. It tastes disgusting", was this journal's verdict on William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*. That was in November 1963 and the review elicited ten weeks of correspondence under the title "Ugh". "Ugh or non-Ugh" remained the question here almost a year after American publication. But in America charges and counter-charges had been flying for at least six years. In the decade from 1957 to 1966 *Naked Lunch* was embroiled in censorship actions at the academic, postal, customs, state and federal levels. Its role was catalytic and decisive. After the Massachusetts Supreme Court majority voted in favour of *Naked Lunch* in July 1966 there was to be no more literary censorship based on obscenity in the United States.

What was at stake was the right of free expression, guaranteed by the First Amendment. But was obscenity protected by the First Amendment? At least three questions were involved: the nature of the licence (what was obscenity?); the nature of the product (what exactly was literature?); and the nature of society (what, by mid-century, was "mainstream"?). The key battles were fought around James Joyce's *Ulysses*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, with one intrusion from the eighteenth century: John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, commonly known as "Fanny Hill". Since then Charles Rembar has studied the "Lady Chatterley" hearing in *The End of Obscenity* (1968). E. R. Hutchinson explored the Miller affair in *Tropic of Cancer on Trial* (1968). Now Michael Barry Goodman has supplied a similar case history for *Naked Lunch*. Prose usually proved a riskier business than verse. Walt Whitman escaped legal charges. So too did Allen Ginsberg, despite the brickbats thrown at him. *Naked Lunch*, however, was presented as prose; it was published as fiction; it linked homosexuality and cannibalism, those two residual and all-powerful taboos of our society. So *Naked Lunch* became the absolute test case.

In 1957 the manuscript had been offered by Ginsberg to Maurice Girodias of the Olympia Press and been rejected. "I later", Girodias said, "the whole thing has been reshaped"; the ends of the pages were all eaten away; the prose was transformed into verse, edited "by the rats or something". But a year later the *Chicago Review* (a quarterly owned by the University of Chicago and run by students) printed "Chap-

ter 2 of *Naked Lunch*". An academic row blew up and future extracts were suppressed. So the editor arranged for an independent magazine, *Big Table*, to print the entire contents of the (Winter 1959) *Chicago Review*. "Ten Episodes from *Naked Lunch*" had pride of place. At this point the United States Post Office stepped in under the so-called "Comstock Act", originally devised to prevent the mailing of literature dealing with abortion. Formal charges were brought against *Big Table*. This bonus of free publicity must have persuaded Girodias to reconsider his rejection of *Naked Lunch*. For a French edition (entitled *The Naked Lunch*) was available outside the United States by late July 1959.

The Post Office case rested on the four-letter, or Anglo-Saxon, words. There were plenty of them in fifty-seven pages of text. No notice was taken that caricatures might be involved, nor of Burroughs's claim to be a "recording instrument" (trained, incidentally, as an anthropologist at Harvard). *Big Table*'s editor put up an intelligent defence, citing Poe and Jarry as precursors and calling Burroughs the most powerful American satirist since Nathaniel West. Eventually he went off beam by placing *Naked Lunch* in the tradition of a play called *Oedipus Rex* by Socrates and Hamlet's murder of his brother. The critical point, though, was clear enough: that Burroughs was a social commentator in a satirical tradition of incest, patricide and fratricide.

As *Big Table*'s attorney remarked after the close of procedures: "The Post Office would do well to remember that its job is to deliver the mail, and that Americans are free to decide what they will read." That was picked up in New York and the literati (Barzun, Burke, Ciardi, Kerner, Trilling) leapt into the fray. For them the controversy turned more on the literary and philosophical attitude of the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight" had appeared in the same issue; and Kerouac they found plain dull. "It is impossible to conceive how any average man can go on reading 'the stuff'", John Ciardi wrote. "Let alone be corrupted by it." In Burroughs, true, it was not dullness that was at issue. As Hugh Kenner put it, veering anxiously between the impersonal and the personal: "One arises from its perusal impressed by the author's virtuosity, and I believe enlightened by what has been set before me, but certainly tempted to try for oneself the experience described."

Testimony to the value of Burroughs's work as a deterrent to drug-taking had already been heard. The age-old insistence on the identity of aesthetic and pragmatic values, however, could not so easily be swept aside. *Big Table* was found "nonmailable". *Naked Lunch* joined *Ulysses*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and run by students) printed "Chap-

*Eternity* in a long list of works banned by the Post Office.

Since *Big Table* was aimed at a self-consciously literate audience, it was odd, to say the least, that it had been bundled in with comics and horror magazines soliciting mass subscriptions. In August 1959 an appeal was filed against the Chicago Postmaster in the Federal District Court. The brief for the appeal rested on the concept of "community standard" set, it was claimed, by Joyce and Lawrence; *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had been cleared by Federal Courts of obscenity charges. Furthermore possible controls. Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, had been excluded from the Post Office hearing. The appeal was successful. In June 1960, two years after its suppression by the University of Chicago, the contents of *Big Table* were found not to be "obscene as a matter of law". It was not four-letter words in themselves, the ruling asserted, that counted but the contexts they served. The use of "shit" and "fuck" violated a cultural and social taboo, not the law. The eating of genitals was certainly shocking, but "clinical appeal is not akin to lustful thoughts".

There the matter might have rested. But copies of the Olympia Press edition were now filtering into America. Obscene material was liable under the Tariff Act of 1930. Despite the removal of the postal ban, Customs continued to consider *Naked Lunch* contraband. Editorial copies were seized en route from Paris to Grove Press which was angling, after the successful Illinois appeal, for rights to an American edition. *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), published by Grove Press in the summer of 1961, had rapidly climbed to number six on the bestseller list.

A Writers' Conference, part of the Edinburgh Festival of 1962, generated enough publicity to consolidate plans for an American *Naked Lunch*; it was now the most celebrated book that almost no one in England or America had read. Ginsberg, by his dedication of *Howl* (1956), had first advertised that "endless novel which will drive everybody mad". Mailer, in *Advertisements for Myself* (1959), had compared Burroughs to Jean Genet. Mary McCarthy, at the Edinburgh Conference, linked *Naked Lunch* with *Lolita*, defending it as "some kind of study of free totalitarianism" (whatever that may mean). Burroughs himself was in attendance, announcing his current concerns. So Grove Press pushed ahead. In November 1962 the first American edition was issued (with testimonies from John Ciardi, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell, Norman Mailer and Terry Southern) to a very mixed reception of resounding praise and contempt. It sold over 14,000 copies by March 1963.

"Banned in Boston" is a long-standing national joke; and, sure

## So much to read, so little to understand

Pisces, or yin and yang, the fish in Mrs Tanaki's porch-side pool - flushed by its faucet waterfall - were corpulent, a plinky belgo,

marinating, as if in a dish, with less meaning than the obscure labels affixed to the jamb of her door. I thought how print on a Japanese page

fell like branches of her weeping willow. A cemetery two gardens away was packed with planks: enormous, written-on

tongue-depressors. But what did they say? Names? Prayers? The carp in their shallow basin might have known once, then forgotten.

Christopher Reid

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enough, the case against *Naked Lunch* erupted, in January 1963, in Boston. A bookseller was arrested for selling a copy. Grove Press, instead of defending the bookseller against criminal charges, decided to press for an *in rem* procedure: that is, to place the book itself on trial. The trial before a Massachusetts Superior Court Judge was eventually set for January 1965. Attorney for the defence waived the right of trial by jury. His case rested on three points, best articulated by Justice Brennan of the United States Supreme Court in 1966:

... it must be established that (a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters; and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value.

Terry Southern's *Candy* was submitted as evidence of "contemporary community standards", together with the relevant page of the *New York Times Book Review* which displayed its bestseller listing over thirty-three weeks.

This was just the prologue to high farce. Spectators, who had carried in copies of *Naked Lunch* under their arms, read along with witnesses passages referred to in their testimony. The book had already achieved the status of a cult. Judge Hudson was to have difficulties in following some of the more bizarre literary effects. Opening for the defence, Edward deGrazia observed that *Naked Lunch* was socially important because it portrayed "one of the country's newest kinds of Hell". Startled, the Judge asked, "Newest kinds of what?" "Hell," deGrazia replied. "Heroin addiction." In the same spirit John Ciardi, comparing *Naked Lunch* to the *Divine Comedy*, argued:

I think the point is that when Dante dipped the sins in excrement, he did not call it excrement. When you are dealing with de-

praved subject matter you must coarsen the language; you must take the rough rasp to the finish in order to indicate its course. I don't see how a man can sin in following the Master in this.

Thomas H. Jackson agreed, citing the military grafter in the *inferno* who makes "a trumpet of his anus". At this, Judge Hudson interrupted the professor to ask if the *inferno* contained any "prurient language". This was ducked with an astute reference to the cannibalistic (though not exactly homosexual) repast of the Ugolino canto. Norman N. Holland was another member of this strange mafia who started the judge. Building on what Ciardi had observed, he testified that

*Naked Lunch* is a religious novel about original sin. I was struck by what Mr Ciardi mentioned, St Augustine. If St Augustine were writing today he might well write something like *Naked Lunch*. "What was that again, please? What did you say?" asked the Judge. Still puzzled, he reverted to the professor's statement later. Would he clarify his remarks that *Naked Lunch* was the sort of book St Augustine would have written were he alive? As a confession, it appeared, leading to a kind of repentance. Did he mean, asked the Judge, that the saint would have referred to the immaculate Conception the way Burroughs had done. "I doubt it", Holland replied.

Norman Mailer took a more pugnacious line. He could go into a gym, he explained, see a young kid fighting, and tell in a minute how far that kid would go. Anyone with long experience could identify a winner, "just like a Judge may form an opinion on the reliability of a witness on the basis of ten, twenty, thirty years of experience in law courts." Judge Hudson, not to be outdone, confided that he had read none of Mailer's books, but asked if his works involved "sex in the naked sense". To which the author of *An American Dream* (1965) replied: "I write in a far chaster tradition."

All these were half-truths, of course. *Naked Lunch* is bifocal, both sardonic and gleeful. It is a parody of homosexuality since it equates the hypodermic needle with a grotesque misuse of the penis. The salacity and self-loathing are linked, as prostitution and addiction are linked. Both narcotics and homosexuality are addictive. Burroughs felt at this point of his career, and destructive of human potentiality. So the trial, however decorously conducted, was a farce: the book is clearly both literary (in its abrasive, colloquial, satirical use of language) and obscene. When asked whether he had not found the antisemitism of the "County Clerk" offensive, Ginsberg exploded:

No, Burroughs is defending the Jews here. Don't you realize he is making a parody of the monstrous speech and thought processes of a red-necked Southern, hate-filled type, who hates everybody. Jews, Negroes, Northerners. Burroughs is taking a very moral position, like defending the good here, I think.

As he himself had written:

A naked lunch is natural to us, we eat really sandwiches. But allegories are so much lettuce. Don't hide the madness.

The Judge's problem, however, was that this hallucinatory text did not seem to be accounted for wholly by a circularity of meaning (as in *Finnegans Wake*) or by the discontinuities of life itself. "Frankly," he admitted, "what I am concerned about is whether or not the insertion of hard-core pornography at any place in a description of an addict's hallucinations becomes seriously and grossly offensive." *Naked Lunch*, Ginsberg argued, like a newspaper had no plot. But the Judge's concern was "whether or not under the guise of portraying the hallucinations of a drug addict, the author has ingeniously satisfied his own whim or fancy, and inserted in this book hard-core pornography." In several places, he explained, "I just fail to see the association between what appears to me to be a grossly vulgar and obscene phrase with the thought expressed in the preceding paragraph or the paragraph which follows."

A similar case against *Naked Lunch*, that came up in Los Angeles, had been rapidly dismissed. But in Boston Judge Hudson ruled that *Naked Lunch* was "obscene, indecent, and impure... and taken as a whole is predominantly prurient, hard-core pornography, and utterly without redeeming social importance". He rejected the claim that the book had scientific value as a detailed account of an addict's delirium, since in that case the First Amendment would protect "trash" by any "mentally sick" author. He stressed the garbage-like nature of the text, concluding that Burroughs had "first collected the foulest and vilest phrases describing unnatural sexual experiences, and tossed them indiscriminately...". Two days later the defence attorney lodged an appeal with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

Meanwhile (three other cases involving obscenity laws were before the United States Supreme Court. The Massachusetts Court waited on Washington. In March 1966 the conviction of the New York publisher, Ralph Ginzburg, for "pandering" (or soliciting) erotic interest was upheld. He had, among other things, attempted to procure mailing privileges from the postmasters of intercourse and Blue Ball, Pennsylvania, though the two towns could not begin to handle the expected volume of mail. So Middlesex, New Jersey, had eventually been landed with the job. The conviction of a New York bookseller for commissioning pamphlets with titles like *Screaming Flesh* and *Madness of Leather* was also upheld. In the case of "Fanny Hill" the majority opinion held that each of the three criteria (prurient interest / patent offensiveness / social value) needed to be independently applied. One criterion could not be cancelled by another. As long as a book had value in other words, it was owed the full protection of the First Amendment. So "Fanny Hill" could be released for sale.

This cleared the way for the Massachusetts Supreme Court judgment (with two justices dissenting) on July 7, 1966. *Naked Lunch*, it was felt, might "appeal to the prurient interest" and was "grossly offensive", but its worth had been established both by the literary reviews and the court testimonies so that *Naked Lunch* could not be considered "utterly without redeeming social value". The ban on *Naked Lunch*, decreed by the lower court, was reversed with the proviso that the book was not to be exploited in the Commonwealth "for the sake of its possible prurient appeal". (Grove Press countered that ominous possibility by incorporating the entire majority verdict into the introduction of their paperback version.)

With that the tide had turned. An American era had closed, marked by the causes célèbres of *Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Naked Lunch*. Whether they belong in each other's company, whether they are in any sense paradigmatic, is not now the question. Judicially they will be remembered as a quartet. With the 1970s a new era opened, marked no longer by literary trials but the cases of magazines like *Hustler*, of books like *Man-Woman Sex Orgies* (illustrated), and of actors in films such as *Deep Throat*. The United States Post Office and United States Customs have long ago changed their ways. Michael Barry Goodman proves a clear-headed and sure-footed guide through these stormy waters. There is some evidence, though slight, of wrong transcription. His is a painstaking review. What might have been a tedious unbinding of files unfolds into a drama of Literature versus Law, bustling with attendant characters and hacks in often farcical confrontation.

As part of their series, "Critical Essays on American Literature", the Boston publishers G. K. Hall have recently issued *Critical Essays on Theodore Dreiser* (343pp. 0 8161 8257 4). The editor, Donald Pizer, has assembled reviews and essays by such writers as H. L. Mencken, Lionel Trilling and Alfred Kazin on various aspects of Dreiser's work, and these are complemented by groups of essays that consider each of the novels in detail.



For his 1931 monograph *Clothes: an Essay upon the Nature and Significance of the Natural and Artificial Integuments worn by Men and Women* Eric Gill provided as illustration ten wood-engravings. Gill's own copy of the work forms part of a sale of books, manuscripts, prints and drawings by Eric Gill, David Jones and their associates to be held by Sotheby's at their New Bond Street premises on 9th November, and the illustration above is taken from the catalogue.

## Information, please

**Pre-1500 private letters in English:** I should be grateful for any information about such material, especially any letters which may not have been already calendared or otherwise noticed in print; for the revision of Wells's *Manuscripts of the Writings in Middle English*.

Britton J. Harwood, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 45056.

**John Clare:** information sought of any Clare manuscripts, fragments of manuscripts, or books containing his initials or his notes in private collections or in smaller libraries; for the Oxford English Texts edition of the poetry of John Clare.

Eric H. Robinson, c/o Oxford University Press, Academic Division, Oxford OX2 6DP.

**Melanie Klein** (1882-1960), psychoanalyst: letters, reminiscences, etc. sought, especially for the period she spent in Budapest and Berlin; for a biography.

Phyllis Grosskurth, 9 Kynance Mews, London SW7.

**Sir John Barbirolli and Evelyn, Lady Barbirolli** (Evelyn Rothwell): any memories, anecdotes, correspondence or memorabilia for an authorized memoir of the subjects' lives together.

Harold Atkins, Peter Cotes, c/o Robson Books, 5/6 Clippstone Street, London W1.

**Mrs Patrick Campbell** (actress, 1865-1940): letters, reminiscences sought for biography.

Margot Peters, 4 Alma Square, London NW8.

**Thomas Dixon** of Sunderland (1831-80): whereabouts of his correspondence with Ruskin, the Rossetis, William Bell Scott et al, apart from those letters held in Tyne and Wear Archives; for a biographical study.

G. E. Milburn, Department of Geography and History, Sunderland Polytechnic, Forster Building, Chester Road, Sunderland SR1 3SD.

**Emin Pasha** (Dr Eduard Schnitzer) (1840-92), German-born explorer of Africa: information sought about the early history of the Schnitzer family of Silesia.

Max Lekus, 356 Daub Avenue, Hewlett, NY 11557, USA.

**Greek and Latin texts:** lists of Greek and Latin authors in print sought from publishers; for a bibliography.

David Perry, LUU Bookshop, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1 1UH.

**G. I. Gurdjieff:** any material based on personal experience; for a history of groups transmitting the ideas of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in Britain since 1949.

James Moore, c/o Routledge and Kegan Paul, 39 Store Street, London WC1E 7DD.

**Robert Herring:** editor of *Life and Letters Today* (1935-50), and a resident of the Derbyshire village of Eckington during the 1940s and 1950s; information sought about his life and literary activities; for a book on notable residents of Eckington.

G. W. Shaw, 2 Church Street, Eckington, Derbyshire S31 9BH.

**Italian broadsides:** for a census of Italian broadsides dealing with health, sanitation and quarantine. It will be appreciated if anyone having knowledge or possession of such documents would inform the undersigned of the dates and number of the items. Full acknowledgement will be made.

Alice D. Weaver, 400 East 58th Street, New York, NY 10022.

**Kelmscott Press:** whereabouts of diaries, correspondence (especially of H. Halliday Sparling), proofs, trial pages, letterbooks, and account books; for a history of the Press.

William S. Peterson, Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

# The search for civic virtue

By Geoffrey Marshall

**MICHAEL WALZER:** *Radical Principles: Reflections of an unreconstructed democrat* 310pp. New York: Basic Books. \$15. 0 465 06824 3

Left-wing political theory is in such a fragmented state that when we meet an unreconstructed radical theorist our instinct may be to feel for him the sort of concern that all the King's horses must have felt when faced with Humpty Dumpty. I must be reported, however, that Michael Walzer has grappled boldly with the centrifugal forces of the past two decades and is in relatively good shape. He may now be a reconstructed socialist or a constructive liberal. In the United States some social liberals may call themselves socialists. But the labels matter less than the arguments. Here the arguments themselves command attention since they are forcefully – and often ingeniously or aphoristically – expressed. They also get better as they go along. In the earlier chapters the reader may find some difficulty in following the thread, since the themes are partly overlapping and there is a certain amount of imaginative leaping from one point to another. Still, that is in the nature of essay writing.

In the opening chapters Professor Walzer sets down some thoughts on the misfortunes of the modern radical. Some of the conclusions are of a negative, though not always of a dismal, kind. One such conclusion is that no further illumination is to be had from Marxist theory, either in the original or in its revised forms. The flux of events in the twentieth century cannot be accounted for by class terminology. Marxism has failed to produce either explanation or consolation for "the outbursts of irrational savagery, the long wars, the failure of working class parties to produce socialist societies, the depth and intensity of nationalist feeling and the drift towards authoritarianism". What Marxism has underestimated are two achievements of bourgeois culture: legal equality and legalized opposition. An unexpected degree of personal liberation has also proved possible without radical change in the structure of liberalism and capitalism. We might consider for example, Walzer says, our recently won right to watch live sex acts on stage, or the entitlement of religious groups to distribute drugs to their members, or the dwindling of religious orthodoxy that allows us to celebrate a black mass in our living-room. These examples of liberation in everyday life may, of course, be perceived as a source of bourgeois culture in which they might not be regarded as unequivocal

indices of the superior life opportunities made available by free-market capitalism. Nevertheless other examples could be chosen which would support the general proposition that Marxism has not succeeded in foisting all the radicals all of the time.

Despite this, Walzer argues, it must be conceded that equality before the law, plus welfare benefits and free expression (even supplemented by the right to watch unrestrained stage performances with redeeming social content), cannot ultimately satisfy the radical temperament. This is the theme of the essay "Dissatisfaction and the Welfare State". For radicals the growth of state power is both a necessary condition of reform and welfare and a threat to self-determination and group action. "In the long run, the issue for socialists is not state power, but power right here, on this shop floor, in this family, in this University, in this city." The mechanism of the welfare state, besides being compatible with great material inequality, may escape popular control and the electoral process be reduced to a last-ditch form of popular self-defence rather than an instrument of self-government. At this point the grievance imputed to the radical citizen of the welfare state is not very fully explained. He is said to be free to pursue happiness but not to be self-determining, since "he does not share political power and has not seized the system". The system, moreover, is something he is not free to reshape. It is not clear whether what is alleged at this point is an individual or a collective disability. It can hardly be the former. Individuals, unless they are Stalins or Churchills, are not able to reshape systems. If, on the other hand, the disability is one attaching to the electorate of the welfare state collectively, it is not sufficiently specified which precise features of the electoral and governmental process prohibit its use for reshaping purposes.

An equally serious item in the indictment is that the welfare state involves the withering-away of political energy. When the objects of the welfare state are achieved (some no doubt estimate optimism here), the political struggle seems to be at an end (as it is in the final stage of the Marxist dialectic). So what the socialist finds disheartening both about the welfare state and communism is that the achievement of its purposes signals the end of the kind of public activity and commitment that he finds enjoyable for his own sake. An unsympathetic reaction might just be to think that socialists are never satisfied. But there may be more to it than this. The notion of public and co-operative activity can certainly be perceived as a source of civic satisfaction and the theme is one that recurs in several of these essays. Walzer himself says in a post-

script that without a sense of shared commitment (which he originally obtained from the comradeship support of the editors of *Dissent* in the 1950s) he could not imagine himself writing about politics at all. It may well be that a society sated with welfare cannot sufficiently satisfy the radical's longing for co-operative endeavour towards some public end.

A similar idea appears in the essay "The Nature of Civility and Civic Virtue in Contemporary America". One of the elements in civic virtue, it is suggested, is the willingness to become committed to a political cause. Citizens who feel no such inclination and are wrapped up in private affairs (or who wish to keep them separate from politics) are a standing affront to such feelings and to those who are moved by them to collective action. In extreme cases the provocation thus afforded may drive radicals into frenetic activity, and occasionally into depression or madness. It is certainly noticeable that the rhetoric of the Left assumes a low provocation-threshold in the face of activities of all kinds that are disapproved of on ideological grounds. When the radical theorist comes to consider the nature of civic virtue, he finds himself pulled in different directions. Some aspects of civic virtue involve restraint, tolerance and loyalty to established norms, and others involve activism, zeal, proselytization and, in appropriate cases, resistance to the established order. Trying to define civic virtue is perhaps an activity more appropriate to the radical citizens of a republic than to the socialist subjects of a monarchy (who for the most part feel no need to define it or to display it). Walzer lists the causes, or at least the signs, of the decline of civic virtue in the United States. They are draft resistance, domestic violence, challenges to academic freedom, the new acceptance of pornography and a lessening in the fervour with which national holidays are celebrated. What, he asks, in the face of this, are we to expect of citizens "each of whom represents, as Rousseau would have said, 1/200,000,000th of the General Will"? Rousseau's unhelpful answer would of course have been that the citizen should stop willing in the interest of 1/200,000,000th (of the Will of All, if we are to be exact) and start willing generally. Walzer's list of symptoms suggests that he should join the army, support the civil liberties union, subscribe to a respectable book club and stay away from street demonstrations.

But the question of civic virtue is a complicated one. Even if we agree that the activities in question are accurate indications of a decline in its incidence, it does not directly follow that the sum total of civic virtue in society has diminished. Some of the practices frowned upon

may perhaps be confined to a minority of the population. Declining to celebrate national holidays is a case in point. In the United States the number of days nationally dedicated to good causes must have increased, so that an undiminished amount of celebration is more thinly spread. In the United Kingdom the celebration of national, bank and other holidays has increased to the point where the end of the one celebration is never far from the beginning of the next, so that we may be suffering in some respects from too much civic virtue rather than too little.

In the middle section of the book the deficiencies of the New Left are examined in some detail. In America the contrasts between the old and the new Left are perhaps more clear-cut than in Europe. On the face of it the Vietnam war and the struggle for black civil rights were obvious differences, but Walzer's analysis implies that both were the occasion for, rather than the cause of, the radical commitment of the white student generation of the 1960s. "Once the call went out it is clear that many of them had been waiting, but why had they been waiting?" The answer suggested is a variation on the welfare-state frustration theory. An affluent generation were deprived by their privileged situation of the opportunity for political struggle and commitment. They revolted, not as in some other generations because of the emptiness of their parents' lives, since many of their parents' lives had been full of struggle, risk-taking and achievement, but because of the absence they foresaw of these elements in their own lives. This sounds plausible, but it cannot fully explain the character of New Left politics and in particular its inclination towards confrontation and violence. In America, it is suggested, an initially gentle middle-class radical group learnt about violence from its involvement with the poor, whose lives were themselves violent. Such an explanation carries less conviction in Britain where urban working-class life has not been characterized by violence to the same degree.

Walzer's radicalism is not the new radicalism, which, to a far greater degree, is exposed to the dangers inherent in radical commitment generally, in that it is high on participation but defective on accounta-

bility. Some remarks, half-seriously made in the essay "A Day in the Life of a Socialist Citizen", point to one reason for Walzer's differing stance: "Participation means the sharing of power among the activists" and "Socialism means the rule of the people with most evenings to spare". The exploitation of such possibilities by activists with evenings, not to say mornings and afternoons, to spare, has been one of the mechanisms by which the Labour Party in Britain has been led to its direct and possibly final split. One beneficial result of the disenchantment on either side of this divide has been that socialists of the traditional or, in Walzer's language, "unreconstructed" variety have been unshaken from the restraints of loyalty to a no longer existing unified movement and feel free to denounce the wilder extravagances of radical rhetoric and action. That tendency is seen at full blast in Professor Walzer's essay "Violence, the Police, the Militants and the Rest of Us", which could be applauded by any conservative or liberal. It makes short work of the slipshod phraseology and sentiment of "authoritarian repression" and "police brutality". If the far Left were to seize power "the rest of us would have no reason to suppose that they would be any different from the people they call 'pigs'". The rejection of restraint on the Left, Walzer says, is the equivalent of extreme and unrestrained laissez-faire on the Right, and it is that extremism on the Left which "makes statist of us all".

Parts two and three of *Radical Principles* contain discussions of theories of revolution, equality and education. Since the late Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, readable theoretical analyses of the problems of democratic socialism have not been plentiful, and unreconstructed British social democrats, struggling to get themselves together, will find much to attract them in these essays. It may strike them, however, that a topic of some importance is missing. A satisfactory testament of democratic socialism must deal at some length with the role of trade unions in the pre-socialist society. What is needed is an extra chapter on "Civic Virtue in an Age of Inflation with Free Collective Bargaining".

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## The Small Brown Nun

The small brown nun in the corner seat  
Smiles out of her wimple and out of her window  
Through thick round glasses and through the glass,  
And her wimple is white and her habit neat  
And whatever she thinks she does not show  
As the train jerks on and the low fields pass.

The beer is warm and the train is late  
And smoke floats out of the carriage window.  
Crosswords are puzzled and papers read,  
But the nun, as smooth as a just washed plate,  
Does nothing at all but smile as we go,  
As if she listened to something said.

Not here, or beyond, or out in the night,  
A close old friend with a gentle joke,  
Telling her something through the window  
Inside her head, all neat and right  
And snug as the white bound round the yolk  
Of a small brown egg in a nest in the snow.

Anthony Thwaite



## Conflicts of complexion

By Carol Rumens

TONI MORRISON:

Tar Baby

309pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.95.  
0 7011 2596 9

HELEN WASHINGTON (Editor):

Any Woman's Blues

Stories by Contemporary Black Women Writers

274pp. Virago. £3.50.  
0 86068 214 8

*Tar Baby* is the complex, dramatic story of a Caribbean household of expatriates. Toni Morrison dextrously interweaves the lives of a white millionaire, Valerian Street, whose fortune was made in candy, his wife Margaret, her honey-skinned protégée Jadine and the black servants, Sydney, Ondine, Thérèse and Gideon, who help them to sustain an outwardly harmonious but nevertheless imperilled existence on the Isle des Chevaliers. The threat to the Street household is not material; rather it derives from unresolved conflicts within and between these brilliantly differentiated personalities – conflicts set in action by the arrival of an interloper discovered hiding in Margaret's bedroom, the black fugitive whose real name is Son.

As the story unfolds we see that complexion is a much more subtle issue than the simple polarization of black and white. Margaret for example has always been an outsider, even in her own community; her fair-skinned, red-haired beauty being her Latin ancestry, and caused her parents to treat her with an admiring but puzzled reserve. Corresponding to Margaret's whiteness is the less-than-blackness of the beautiful Jadine. The niece of Sydney and Ondine, she has been expensively educated by Valerian. With her degree from the Sorbonne, her fur coat made of the skins of "ninety baby seals", and her picture on the cover of *Elle*, she seems to exemplify an effortless transition from one culture to another. A deep conflict is, however, manifested in her recurrent nightmares, and when Son appears it is to present her with a radical challenge to her Westernization.

Son and Jadine embark on a passionate love affair, and run away to New York. But Son is ill at ease in the big city where Jadine is most at home. He is drawn back to the small-town camaraderie of Eloe, his birthplace; here, Jadine is tormented by nightmares and boredom. During a spectacular argument, he suspends her by her wrists from an upstairs window and quotes at her the Uncle Remus fable of the Tar Baby. In his version, it is a white farmer who builds the Tar Baby, a trap which initially catches, but is then foiled

by the resourceful Brer Rabbit. It is a dual symbolism for both Son and Jadine; just as he represents for her the ensnaring horror of her own roots, her cultivated beauty is for him a magnetic temptation to self-betrayal.

Although the events concerning Son and Jadine take place after the dénouement in which, at the Streets' disastrous Christmas dinner, Ondine reveals a terrible truth about Margaret's past, Morrison's narrative skills completely forestall any sense of anticlimax. The novel's plot moves inexorably to a conclusion in which Son's death seems probable but by no means inevitable. He has arrived once more on the island, this time disembarking on the far, uninhabited side, said to be haunted by the blind horsemen descended from the first slaves to be shipped there the Chevaliers. We do not know whether Son will choose Jadine, and death, or the racial integrity symbolized by the wild terrain of the horsemen. But as he runs through the trees, the sound of his feet – "lickety split, lickety split" – echoes the slap of Brer Rabbit's paws in the Uncle Remus tale – "lickety clippity, lickety clippity"; so perhaps we are to infer that Son's instinct for survival will triumph over his passion and his essential innocence.

Morrison is not an easy writer. Her prose is rich and allusive, and she has a habit of anticipating her plot in a seemingly casual phrase

that only acquires its full meaning after one has read on, and back. The ease with which she thinks and sees in symbols means that the reader must be constantly alert as to where a metaphor ends and straight narrative begins. Sometimes she will develop a conceit over several pages; when, for example, wisps of fog are described as "the hair of maiden aunts" it is a cue for the aunts themselves to materialize and provide a distant chorus of commentary during the ensuing action. Clouds and trees share sentence with human beings; during the rape of the Isle by the first settlers, the river, diverted, becomes "ill and grieving", and the fish "race off to carry the news of the scatterbrained river to the peaks of hills and the tops of the champion daisy trees". The dreams and even the thoughts of many of the characters have a vivid, wakeful actuality. The amalgamation of different imaginative elements into a single immediacy gives Morrison's work its density, and this is combined with a superb dramatic sense.

Not surprisingly, the stories in *Any Woman's Blues* cannot match the depth and breadth of Morrison's vision, but there are nevertheless some lively contributions by a variety of black women writers including Ntozake Shange and Alice Walker. A fiercely harrowing extract from an earlier Toni Morrison novel, *Sula*, is perhaps not the most enticing introduction to her work for new readers.

## On Grand Central station ...

By Linda Taylor

LISA ZEIDNER:

Customs

272pp. Cape. £6.95.  
0 224 02923 1

In Lisa Zeidner's first novel, *Customs*, the compulsive story-teller Mildred Howell, dying of a malignant tumour and heart trouble, buttonholes the novel's narrator, Jennifer Spell, at Grand Central Station. She proceeds to tell her a tale which begins in 1880 and conveniently arrives at the present day just before Mildred dies of heart failure after a mugging in Washington Square.

Like the good witch of fairy tales, Mildred's derelict outward appearance hides a still youthful body. She is eighty years old and dresses like a tramp, but her hair is long and blonde and "only slightly thinning at the ends", and her skin is flawless. Mildred claims to be magic; she also has a vast amount of money which goes a long way to aid her eccentricity and tricks. At the beginning of the novel, Mildred specifies its framework:

"This story will take a long time to tell, weeks. Maybe months. There are eleven major characters in my story and you will have to concentrate to get their names straight, no less learn to love them. I'll try to answer your questions and provide enough foreshadowing to keep your faith, but it's my story, not yours. Is that clear?"

Yes, very clear, and pretty good advice to any listener/reader. Jennifer, in particular, needs to be a good listener because Mildred's story, both literally and metaphorically, tells her much about her own life.

Through the vagaries of coincidence, Jennifer Spell's history turns out to be linked to Mildred Howell's. Mildred's story gradually reveals how they are both related to a very odd set of incestuous and about who were responsible for founding a town called Tourisne in the French Alps before turning their attention to America. In Paris and Pld and Casey and Katey and Kisa and Gato and Frog lies the key to Lisa Zeidner's symbolism. "My story

is about tourists in the sense that all of us are tourists," says Mildred, and the town is the setting for a complicated interweaving of transient lives. But, as Mildred has warned us, the story does take a long time to tell – approximately half of the twenty-four chapters; it is hard to get the characters' names straight (not to mention their relationships) and it's almost impossible to love their particular brand of petulant romanticism. The story's complicated irrelevance heavily outweighs any pleasure that is to be gained from its light-heartedness. The point about tourists could have been made more economically.

Jennifer, meanwhile, freed by her meeting with Mildred from her own allegiances to work and to her boyfriend, moves from an initial healthy scepticism, "That's the problem with this story... You talk all right, but sometimes I'm not sure how it's supposed to pay off", to guilty conspiracy, "I don't know what to do to return her kindness" (Mildred has given her a Steinway). "The only

thing I could think to do was to listen to her story better, to be more enthusiastic about her story". The pay-off for Jennifer's attentiveness and for her growing devotion to Mildred is the inheritance of a portion of the money and, more importantly, of Mildred's eccentricity. At the end of the novel, Jennifer's newly acquired irresponsibility hangs in the air: "I could barely walk in my high French shoes, but I was as giddy as a schoolgirl and not ashamed. I was a citizen of the heart; I could afford to be a tourist." Like the most adventurous of tourists, she has begun to acquire a disregard for customs, and it presumably won't be long before she is found at Grand Central Station in baggy stockings and untucked blouse telling the Tourisne tale.

Lisa Zeidner is very good at one-liners. "Sundays are only airbrushed into the calendar", "making love was non-caloric", "the Spells did not believe in God. We didn't like melodrama", and so on. This kind of knife-edged detail, though it has a tendency to turn into continuous

chirpiness, is what most strongly defines the character of Jennifer. The novel is at its best when dealing with her relationship with Mildred.

When it comes to the story within the story, though – the one that Casey told Mildred who told it to Jennifer who tells it to us – Don Quixote seems to have got it right. "Tell it concisely," he says, faced with Sancho's digressive narrative about the goats, "and like a man of sense, or else say no more". Then, reluctantly agreeing to Sancho's conditions, Don Quixote forgets to count the goats, and the story comes to an end. Fortunately for Mildred, Jennifer gets better and better at counting the goats, and the story goes on.

Not only is *Customs* incestuous in its subject matter; for in the narrator, Jennifer, teller and listener are combined. The internal story strikes resounding chords in her, while the reader is left puzzled and dissatisfied – a somewhat obsolete voyeur of Jennifer's liaison with herself.

## Wearing the gold stud

By T. J. Binyon

DAN KAVANAGH:

Fiddle City

173pp. Cape. £5.95.  
0 224 01977 5

Dan Kavanagh's first crime novel, *Duffy*, introduced his private investigator hero: a bisexual, blouson-clad ex-policeman with a longish brush cut and a gold stud in one ear, who has been framed off the force by a bent copper and a Soho racketeer. The book was widely – and rightly – praised. It was a stylish, witty piece of work which began with a bang and kept up the pace throughout, working up a good head of moral indignation on the way; a sharply-drawn, convincing picture of the Soho of massage parlours, cinema clubs and peep shows, which had a plot of just the right complexity and a distinctly frightening villain – a Mr Big with an Oxford accent and a

worrying way with a cheese wire.

Duffy was obviously too good a character to let go, and in this novel Dan Kavanagh brings him back and plants him in an another of London's plague spots – Heathrow, otherwise known as Thievesrow or Fiddle City. A small freight company finds that far too much stuff is falling off the back of its lorries, and calls in Duffy to investigate. But there's more than just nicking going on, and Duffy's gold stud comes in for some considerable wear and tear before matters are eventually cleared up.

Though he's billed as bisexual – a description that's often repeated – Duffy spends most of his free time travelling for trade at the Alligator, a gay club in Fulham. And it's tempting to compare him with Dave Brandstetter, Joseph Hansen's homosexual Californian insurance investigator.

Obvious differences are that California is a more colourful background than Fulham, and that Duffy, unlike Brandstetter, doesn't have

friends who wear chunky gold chains and crushed velvet jumpsuits open to the navel. Yet, though Kavanagh is a better and a more amusing writer than Hansen, he hasn't managed to give Duffy the solidity as a character that Brandstetter undoubtedly possesses. Duffy is obsessive about cleanliness, hates the ticking of clocks and watches at night, can't stand the telephone, dislikes aeroplanes and is more than somewhat taciturn, but there's no centre to hold his amiable eccentricities together and make him into a credible personality. And *Fiddle City* is a disappointment after *Duffy* in that the author has shortchanged his readers as far as intrigue is concerned – very unlike Hansen, who usually overeggs his pudding in this respect.

But the kind of criticism one feels bound to make indicates that the books are a cut or two above normal examples of the genre. Villains and their villainy may be obvious after the first few pages, but Kavanagh keeps one reading.

## Images of undivided souls

By Louis Allen

RICHARD TAMES:

Servant of the Shogun

144pp. Tenterden: Paul Norbury. £5.95. (paperback, £3.50).  
0 904404 39 0

HENRY SMITH (Editor):

Learning from Shogun  
Japanese History and Western Fantasy

163pp. Program in Asian Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, California 93106. \$4.95.

MICHAEL MACINTYRE:

The Shogun Inheritance  
Japan and the Legacy of the Samurai

216pp. Collins/BBC. £12.95.  
0 00 216350 0

The problem in relation to James Clavell's *Shogun* is not one of sales but of the permanence of the image of Japan it has created in all its various widespread avatars: book, film, board-game, and a television mini-series which I watched with increasingly hilarious disbelief in a Tokyo flat this spring. It is a splendid story, but then, so is the story upon which it is based, as is amply proved by Richard Tames's *Servant of the Shogun*, a life of the original of Clavell's hero, Black-thorne. Will Adams, a man of Kent, Shakespeare's exact contemporary and the first Englishman ever to set foot in Japan, remained there from 1600 to his death in 1620, teaching the Japanese his skills as a pilot, with some geography, mathematics and naval architecture thrown in, much as the *yatoi*, or foreign helpers, were to do in the nineteenth century for the resurrected Japanese empire, once the shogunate had been dissolved.

Tames's book shows us that Adams did his best to break the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly as traders and advisers in Japan with great success. He became so absorbed in the life of

the country that later arrivals from the East India Company thought him "a naturalized Japanese". But Adams also conspired with the Dutch, who were destroying all Spanish and Portuguese shipping in the South China sea-lanes and the East Indies. When they extended their depredations to the English, seizing an English vessel, Richard Cocks, representing the Company in Japan, was infuriated that the Shogun refused to take measures against them. He was deeply suspicious of Adams's lack of enthusiasm for an attack on the Dutch.

Yet it is clear that Adams's greatest tribulations – and the Company's – were not the Japanese authorities nor the heretic-hunting Spaniards but his own drunken, lecherous and blaspheming fellow-countrymen. Time and again, the English seamen went ashore in Japan to seek out women and liquor and fields in which to fight. Perhaps one should add that they were not all English – the worst hooligans were called Williams and Evans. In the light of all this, Japanese forbearance was quite remarkable, as was the Shogun Ieyasu's willingness to let the English try their own malefactors – a concession Japanese politicians in the nineteenth century were compelled to reintroduce and then spent decades trying to reverse.

To some extent Tames's matter-of-fact narrative helps us to understand the Japanese policy of *sakoku*, or "closing the country". Whether they were really threatened by what they took to be Iberian conspirators on the one hand, or English and Welsh roisters on the other, the Japanese can have had little reason to feel affection for their European visitors. Only the brothel keepers had cause to welcome them, so much so that they threatened to kill any ship's officer who ventured on land to reclaim his men. Characteristically, on a journey to the Shogun's capital of Edo, Captain John Saris's sailors passed through Kamakura and

called to see the great bronze Buddha which was to attract Kipling's attention more than two centuries later. "This image is much revered by Travellers as they pass," Saris noted. It did not deter his seamen. "Some of our people", he added, "went into the body of it, and hooped and hallowed, which made an exceedingly great noise." Ironically enough, in 1952 the British Ambassador Sir Ester Denning failed to turn up at the annual ceremony to celebrate the memorial stone to Adams in Ito because, the *Nippon Times* averred, there was a dispute between Japan and Britain over two British sailors imprisoned for robbery.

The massive structure James Clavell has erected upon the life of Will Adams has, of course, borne all kinds of fruit. There is even a book about how the television series was made from the original book; and Suntory is said to have named an improbable mixture of wine and sake after it. The editor of *Learning from Shogun* believes that its impact on the reading and viewing public has been and will be enormous. It is his further contention, though, which is interesting: if it is so enormous, then American students of Japanese – the Japanologists of the future – will be affected by it, and may even in some cases have received their first impetus towards Japanese from it. So rather than give a scholarly sniff or simply avert their gaze, a team of Santa Barbara professors has decided to grin and bear it, and to use the inevitable reading of *Shogun* as a basis for instruction as well as recitation.

The venture is both intriguing and wrong-headed. It is hard for an outsider to analyse the soul of a people, particularly when for three years he was, like Clavell, that people's prisoner-of-war. The very attempt to write *Shogun* in the first place is very much to Clavell's credit. He makes no mystery of this:

Well, I learned fairly young about the Japanese and their attitudes toward life. I was barely eighteen, I was a teenager, right? We were surrounded by death and destruction, people died like flies. So I have different attitudes towards things. . . . I just admire the Japanese. It's possible to end up admiring an enemy. The relationship of conqueror and conquered can be an intriguing one; it doesn't necessarily lead to hate.

Clavell's attempt to come to grips with his former enemy, not merely in terms of invented narrative but also of sheer information, has led to the acquisition and display of a vast farrago of "knowledge" about Japan, which the editor of *Learning from Shogun*, Professor Henry Smith, clearly believes can be of great use. In fact he seems somewhat overawed by it all and it has given his own book a defiant little anti-academic twist:

In sheer quantity, *Shogun* has probably conveyed more information about Japan to more people than all the combined writings of scholars, journalists and novelists since the Pacific War . . . this immensely influential novel about Japan should encourage academic specialists to rethink some basic issues of communication: Who is our audience? What are we trying to say? And how are we trying to say it?

But isn't this to consider the novel-form as the one thing it is least, a conveyor of information? Undeterred by critical scruples – in fact he positively excludes any literary consideration of *Shogun* – Smith declares that it is information content which sets it apart from its predecessors. For Will Adams has already been the hero of half-a-dozen novels:

At a purely descriptive level, *Shogun* is a virtual encyclopedia of Japanese history and culture: somewhere among those half-million words, one

can find a brief description of virtually everything one wanted to know about Japan.

An awesome claim; and quite unfounded. The Japanese have long been vulnerable to false interpretations by foreigners. On-the-spot observation by missionaries or consuls has had less impact than the lingering notes of a forlorn soprano or the jollification of Gilbert and Sullivan. That is why, feeling that westerners have not always seen them as they are but as a cartoon drawn in terms of what westerners want to see, the post-war Japanese have been much exercised to change that cartoon into a portrait, or at any rate into some sort of likeness of what they conceive themselves to be. Whether they are right about themselves is, of course, another matter.

Michiko Kaya runs an organization for revising the reports on Japan that appear in western textbooks – the International Society for Educational Information – and has done a painstaking job over several decades in rectifying ships of detail and massive errors of interpretation. Her reaction to *Shogun* is far from favourable:

... the strong interest in feudal Japan it has created will not pose any problem as long as readers regard the story as semi-historical fiction. Recently, however, an American University proposed that *Shogun* should be used as a basis for a secondary school textbook. In as much as *Shogun* is historical fiction, as indeed is stated by its author, and in a number of ways does not present an accurate picture of Japanese customs, language or way of thought even in the feudal age, its widespread use as an educational instrument is inadvisable. An exciting and well-written story on a subject unfamiliar to its readers may mislead them into thinking that fiction is fact. Fiction writers, in any country, have the prerogative of colouring or

## OKADA, SINODA, & TSUTAKA

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exaggerating their stance, but those directly concerned with education cannot afford to spread misinformation.

Perhaps Miss Kaya's views are exceptional. Many Japanese will no doubt be glad to find any idea of their country being thrust upon the world other than that of economic aggression, which has supplanted the 1940s version of Japan as military aggressor, though their real feelings might be better expressed by the film director Kurosawa, who has said that Japan is not well understood abroad even now, "a TV series like the American *Shogun* wouldn't be made if it were".

One of the problems is that *Shogun* is not merely occupied with external, but seeks to get inside the Japanese mind as well. A few western writers may have penetrated this, either like Lafcadio Hearn in terms of sentimentality and folklore, or in terms of domestic relations like William Plomer, whose *Paper Houses* remains one of the best fictional attempts to come to grips with the nature of the Japanese. But Clavell has made even more difficulties for himself in seeking our assent not to how Japan is, but to how it was. There are some excellent western histories of Japan and many translations of Japanese classics are available to flesh them out. Clavell has consulted Michael Cooper's and C.R. Boxer's accounts of early Portuguese missionaries and Dutch traders. But, as *Learning from Shogun* points out—though on tiptoe—he has done this without a historian's sense of distance.

*Learning from Shogun* has twelve chapters, which encompass historical facts about Will Adams, the problems of cultural opposites, Elizabethan history, Far Eastern trade and diplomacy, Shogunate politics, and a miscellany of encounters with Japanese women, the Japanese idea of death, Japanese language as mirrored in *Shogun*, the role of the samurai, and the difficulties of Japanese daily life. The book has a glossary of terms, a bibliography, a biographical dictionary of characters and their probable models, and an essay on how the television series has further simplified and altered the shape of the novel (disastrously and impetuously).

In this essay the interesting observation is made that the re-shaping of the novel for television goes deeper than Clavell's own admission (the is a screenwriter as well as a novelist): "you don't relate film form to book form". In the novel, Blackthorne is the alien who gradually learns the virtues of a subtle though cruel civilization and values it, in which, above his own. In the television series, Blackthorne is simply the hero and his Japanese surroundings are alien. This difference of perspective, Professor Smith insists, is not simply a matter of form: "it reveals instead a tacit conviction that the American television public in 1980 is so xenophobic that it cannot tolerate an image of the Japanese (or presumably other such non-white, non-Christian cultures) as anything more than incomprehensible 'aliens'". Some of the "alienation" was, inevitably, linguistic and derived from a concern for authenticity—as well as economizing on dubbing—whereby the audience should be as puzzled by the strange sounds as the hero himself. But its by-product was unfortunate: the debates on politics and strategy which go on in the novel, either inside the heads of the Japanese *daimyo* or spoken among themselves, simply vanish and a whole range of motivation is instantly excluded from the film.

According to Smith, this matters less than the emphasis on scenes of cruelty and barbaric punishment, which made some Japanese-Americans characterize the series as subtly racist, presenting gross and odious stereotypes, the Japanese being cast as "a race to whom life has little meaning except death". Clavell's claim that *Shogun* is "passionately pro-Japanese" does not seem to have survived translation to the small screen.

But of course Clavell's good will is not enough. Massive though the detail is, it is full of errors of fact and interpretation as, one after the other, Smith's collaborators show, despite their manifest intention to make the best of things. The Japanese language is introduced sometimes in phrases which make sense, at other times in misspelled gobbledegook. The concept of *karma* is accurately defined but misused by the characters to mean ineluctable destiny, from which the

self-shaping inherent in the notion is omitted. The heroine Mariko's lectures to Blackthorne on the position of women in Japan ("We own wealth and property, our bodies and our spirits. We have tremendous powers if we wish") are simply wrong by about four hundred years. "We may leave our husbands if we wish, divorce them", she proclaims. In fact, at that period women could be married, divorced and remarried and taken away from their children, at the whim of the men in their family, without being consulted. And her assertion that "we can go freely where we please, when we please" is contradicted by samurai codes which forbade women to go out, to receive men visitors, or attend religious services without the men of their own family. Clavell's ideas about women are a mishmash drawn from a thousand years of Japanese history and for any one given period they are simply not true. Characteristically, Professor Smith turns this clumsy anachronism into a virtue:

From a literary point of view, such a telescoped portrayal is effective, since it increases the diversity and complexity of the female characters and their attitudes.

As well justify the portrayal of a modern Englishwoman by attributing to her the characteristics of Boadicea, Nell Gwyn and Queen Victoria.

Blackthorne's initial attitudes to sex seem to belong to the Victorian era rather than the Elizabethan, but this too is easily explicable by the major fact that must be borne in mind by readers of *Shogun*: it is a "conversion" novel, a kind of oriental *Lass and Gai*. Indeed Newman is here a useful pointer in another direction, since his opponent Kingsley would have felt completely at home with Clavell's *Westward Ho!*-style treatment of the Portuguese Jesuits, with their improbably spelt names, as calculating, servile manipulators of the sacred. On the other hand, Blackthorne's conversion is not to a religion but to a way of life, in which there is no bodily shame, language is deceptively simple, people are spotlessly clean, and death is merely to be scorned. Europe is wrong, Japan is right, or, as Blackthorne puts it, "Heaven on earth is here".

With his wonderful gift for making the obvious seem profound, Roland Barthes has summed up in advance what *Shogun* has done and will do to "the empire of signs".

If I want to introduce a fictitious people, I can give them an invented name... so as not to involve any real country in my fantasy... I can also, without claiming in any way to represent or analyse the slightest reality, borrow from somewhere else in the world a certain number of features... and from these features deliberately shape a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan.

Michael Macintyre's book, gorgeously produced, is a visual exploration of the empire of signs. *The Shogun Inheritance*, written to build on a television series, is a coffee-table book in which the virtuosity of the BBC cameramen is startling, even when they are competing with the myriad hooks of photographs of Japan published by the Japanese themselves. Mr Macintyre is no tyro, though. He has lived and worked in Japan and has taken care to have his text vetted by British and Japanese scholars. He does not introduce us to an unknown Japan, at least not in terms of *ideas*: the importance of the samurai, the role of the sword, the concept of duty, the sacralization of nature in Shinto, the taste for refinement in Zen and the tea ceremony, the ceremonial inseparable from wrestling and the theatre, and the fast-contracting world of the geisha. In the Gion area of Kyoto, where an unpossessing geisha and a pretty *maiko* or apprentice geisha entertained me fifteen years ago, there are now only twenty-seven geisha and four *maiko* left. If glamour is what young Japanese girls want, Macintyre comments, they are more likely to become actresses and models, or dancers in night-clubs.

The text, then, is informative even though it employs that familiar dualism which seems inescapable whenever we talk about Japan; but it is the pictures which hold the reader. The wrinkled face of an old archer tranquilly gazing beyond the curve of his bow; *sumo* wrestlers, huge-mountainous men, heaving at each other in the few desperate seconds in the ring after the

camera has caught the wide-flung spray of purifying salt that precedes their stately entry; a swordsmith bending over his blade with the rapt intensity of a scholar peering at a papyrus; the cool straw-matted rooms of a house in Kyushu, papered panels pushed aside to reveal the tiny landscape garden of rocks and pool beyond; the curved roofs of Himeji Castle soaring into the heavens like the gravity-defying white heron it is said to resemble; and the world of children. Only rarely, though, in these photographs, are they smiling, and that is a pity. It is because Mr Macintyre's cameramen have shot them at ceremonial moments, a festival, a parade, a shrine ritual—when they are playing adult roles and are inhabited by the deep seriousness of the occasion. But the child's world in Japan is one of happiness and relative freedom, out of school at any rate, before Mr Matsushita gets hold of him and proffers a disciplined and prosperous future.

Both scholars and those who know nothing of Japan will find great enjoyment and beauty in these images. And there is a final word from Fosco Maraini on the pervasive influence of Shinto which helps us to realize why James Clavell has striven over twelve hundred pages to grapple with a reality which can be more succinctly defined:

The Japanese, both in work and relaxation, enjoy the mere fact of living up to the hill. They work, like myriads of buzzing bees, with a dedication that can only stem from an undivided and terribly healthy soul. No doubts, caused by the memory of some original sin in the backyard of the collective unconscious, trouble their sleep... The world is good; work is good; fruits are good; sex is good; and even war is good, provided you win it.

To those of us—Japanese included—who think that Japan's defeat in 1945 was one of the most beneficial things to have happened in her entire history, the last phrase may seem not merely cynical but wrong-headed. Never mind. The images of *The Shogun Inheritance* show that the Japanese, however deathward-turning much of their history may be, retain a capacity for energizing life to the full.

## Knowing the kanji

By D. J. Enright

MICHAEL PYE:  
*Everyday Japanese Characters*  
80pp. Duckworth. £1.25.  
0 7156 1515 7

To describe, explain and inscribe on the reader's inner eye the more commonly encountered Japanese characters in seventy-six pages—with the two phonetic systems thrown in—is of course as impossible as turning *Remembrance of Things Past* into a film script. The latter has been done, and so now has the former, the result in each case being what one might call a success "in itself".

The present project is more certainly notable as civilized entertainment than for its utility. To identify *kanji* (the word actually means "Chinese characters") as pictures of what they may once have depicted is another of those mnemonics which are harder to remember than what they are meant to remind us of. Perhaps *tori* does look like a bird, and *yama* like a mountain; to spot *shimo*, "island" we have to recall someone's theory that this was "a protruding mountain on which the birds could alight". The sign for *kaminari* combines two signs, for "rain" and for "rice-field", and so "the idea of thunder is given by rain over the rice-fields". Does the foreign visitor in Japan need to know this? He is hardly likely to come across a notice: BEWARE OF THE THUNDER. But reason not the need. And in fact, via "lightning" (just add "a vicious forked tail" to "thunder"), we are working up to "electricity" and thence to the important compound characters for

"telegram", "telephone" and "electric train".

"Stations in Japan are often large and complicated", and may have the nasty habit, observed elsewhere, of changing their shape. It is useful therefore to know the *kanji* for "entrance" and "exit". This isn't as simple as one might have thought: a combination of the two indicates a way both in and out, a combination of three characters indicates an emergency exit and, since "nowadays there seems to be a trend in some buildings to make the ordinary exit the best one to use in emergencies as well", a further combination, involving four characters, indicates ordinary-and-emergency-exit. Then of course there are exits marked according to districts, streets or the points of the compass, of the kind that befuddle users of our own tiny London underground system.

To save the traveller from queuing wrongly, Michael Pye lists ticket-office signs—season tickets, off-peak tickets, express tickets, green tickets ("special amenity travel"), group tickets, reserved-seat tickets, sleeper tickets and platform tickets. The next step is to find the right platform and to study the various *kanji* for various sorts of trains, such as "each-station-stop-train", "ordinary train" ("in practice this is the same as the above"), "semi-express" or "fast train", "express" (literally, "hurry-go"), "special express" and "super special express" ("these really go places"). Visitors to Britain are sometimes puzzled by the terminology of drinking: "special bitter" and "best bitter", both of which are ordinary. But our pubs are child's play compared with Japanese railway stations. You will need to have the requisite *kanji* at the tip of your eyeballs if you are to purchase the

right ticket and get into the right train on the right day.

Pye points out that when the English term for *benjo* is used, it not infrequently suffers some distortion and appears as TOILT or TO LET. (There was a time when objects manufactured in Japan bore the legend "Made in Grate Britain", but that was long, long ago, almost as far back as the famous sign SUNLIGHT SOAP. LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED which once flaunted itself over a Tokyo station, no doubt enticing many a traveller into the wrong exit.) Michael Pye gives the character for this essential convenience, and adds that "a more refined word" is the one pronounced *o-te-ara*, literally "honourable-hand-washing" (the *te* character does resemble hands, which is helpful). True, this corresponds closely to the English expression, but visitors should proceed with caution. Attempting once to be refined in a district that wasn't, I found myself directed to a stand-pipe in the street. Euphemisms can be treacherous, and it is safer to ask for *benjo* (vulgar, but then so are foreigners), and make sure there is a supply of toilet-to-pepa.

At the least this modest and ambitious little book offers pleasure and amusement to both the traveller and the armchair-bound, and it may lead readers onwards to the author's more advanced *Study of Kanji*, published by that admirable and xenophile house, The Hokuseido Press, with which the present item originated. Even so, my advice to the traveller is: learn enough spoken Japanese (readily romanized and therefore fairly easily memorized) to inquire the way, the how and the what. Some *kanji* are bad characters and mean five or six different things.

## A relish for roughness

By Christopher Reid

LOUISE ALLISON CORT:  
*Shigaraki, Potters' Valley*  
428pp. Kodansha International. £36.  
0 87011 382 8

Louise Allison Cort's book on the pottery of the Shigaraki valley, some eighteen miles south-east of Kyoto, represents astonishing feats of erudition and understanding. With more than three hundred photographs, fifty-two of which, in full colour, show major pieces of work from the fourteenth century onwards, it turns out to be a great deal more than a sumptuous coffee-table ornament. Not only do Cort's researches encompass a history of Shigaraki ware, but she shows, too, a thorough sense of how geographical, political, commercial and aesthetic forces determined its development. Of these things, perhaps the last offers the most perplexity to Western observers, unaccustomed to the Japanese delight in humble artefacts. This is a tricky area, full of mystique and paradox, but certain key passages of *Shigaraki, Potters' Valley* will help to make it comprehensible.

Cort is at her best on this. Having consulted the "tea diaries" kept by the masters of the ritual, in which every ceremony and its appurtenances were scrupulously described and commented on, she has been able to show how the austere *wabi-suki* aesthetic first came into, and then fell from, favour. In earlier medieval days tea-drinking had already been ritualized, as a rich man's pastime, during which vessels of only the choicest pedigree, Chinese or Korean, would be used. Civil war, however, destroyed not only the social order that fostered such customs, but many of the utensils as well. When later, under Zen influence, a revival of the ceremony took place, new codes had to be devised whereby it was permissible to bring in common Japanese pieces alongside the few remaining artefacts of old. Aesthetic refinement was judged according to the tasteful balance of crude against noble pieces, and so Shigaraki jars found a somewhat anomalous role as objects of spiritual importance. A severely prescribed vocabulary, borrowed from the poetic discipline of the *renga*, evolved for their appreciation, and it was all but forgotten that most

runnels of dark-green glaze. The best pieces are incomparably handsome.

But some find them too rough and ready. Cort quotes a modern Japanese potter's scepticism with regard to the old Shigaraki style: "Shigaraki is something you try once but not twice. It's too tempting—that's why I stay away from it. The artist just fools himself by telling himself that the accidental blunders give the piece 'flavor' and that intentionally clumsy potting is 'skillful'. Those old potters were clumsy, but modern ceramicists turn everything upside down." As it happens, it is not just modern criticism that turns things upside down: a sophisticated relish of the roughness and imperfections of Shigaraki's fundamentally utilitarian ware was exactly what led the tea-masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to admit such pieces as tea-ceremony utensils.

More recent Shigaraki pottery has, in fact, been growing away from the old style. The need for tea-jars finally diminished and other wares took their place. Since the beginning of this century, Shigaraki has been noted for the production of, among other things, urns, teapots for use in rail travel, building tiles, garden furniture and, during the last war, a range of ceramic mines and hand-grenades, beautifully glazed. It would be hard to contrive an aesthetic that allowed for a love of such objects, and yet Cort's survey includes them all. Her book is irreproachably thorough, but it is likely that private purchasers will value it, first, for its excellent photographic reproductions, and secondly, for Louise Allison Cort's discussion of aesthetic matters, which is bound to throw light far beyond the confines of the Shigaraki valley.

of them had been made for the mere storage of agricultural produce.

Locked in museum cabinets, the pots that we see in the West have a muted, ambivalent status. Cort was lucky enough to meet owners of old Shigaraki pieces who, she says, "often touch them, stroke them, or hold them; and indeed", she adds, cradling a big, empty Shigaraki jar in one's arms gives a new sense of its presence. I will never forget how the Mino potter Arakawa Toyozō showed me his Shigaraki jar: he carried it out into his little mossy garden and splashed it with ladlefuls of water from a stone basin, until the surface of the pot was dripping and glowing.

Something of the tea-masters' appreciation of these wares survives in the response of those of us who still find these pots exhilarating to contemplate. I can think of at least one outstanding British potter, Ewen Henderson, for whom Shigaraki has been a powerful inspiration. To others, the work will appear no more than accidental, bucolic, even downright ugly, but this is a matter of taste and there is ultimately no point in arguing.

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## An album of agonies

By Michael Sullivan

JOHN W. DOWER (Editor)

A Century of Japanese Photography  
365pp with 514 illustrations. Hutchinson. £25.  
0 09 145500 6

In his introduction to this richly illustrated and disturbing book John Dower warns his reader that the photograph can be not only a record but a distorting mirror of the past. It can, he writes,

confer a kind of arbitrary immortality upon those images and events that happen to be captured; and what is a compelling way of remembering can simultaneously operate as a way of forgetting, as later generations lose sight of what for one reason or another was not preserved, or memorably preserved, on film...and terrible violence can be done to the past as the camera turns poses into personalities, fragments into wholes, transience into permanence, minute splinters of time into eternities...or gives a romantic patina to what actually may have been experienced as routine, mundane, miserable, painful, heart-breaking.

This is well put and worth bearing in mind as we leaf through this extraordinary collection; but does not art do this too, and more effectively? There is not much romance here. When we compare the cool, elegant woodcuts of Utamaro with the photograph of a post-house prostitute by an unknown photographer of the Bakumatsu or early Meiji period, we are struck by the sordidness the camera reveals despite the studied pose, and which the pure line and colour of a Utamaro print refines away.

The historical introduction, based largely but not entirely on that to the original Japanese edition *Nihon Shashin Shi, 1840-1945* of 1971, notes that daguerreotypes were being made in Japan by masters of "Dutch learning" even before the arrival of Commodore Perry's Black Ships in 1853, and perhaps as early as 1841. The collodion wet-plate process was introduced in the late 1850s, in time to capture the twilight of the Tokugawa era, the end of the Edo, the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and the hopeless rebellions of conservative samurai that went on till 1877. Japan had no Matthew Brady to record her civil wars in detail, but the few photographs that do survive from this period are telling enough. The dying convulsions of feudalism are vividly brought home in Ueno Hikoma's portraits of young samurai, which show these men not as romantic knights-errant but as they really were—dedicated killers. Indeed the overwhelming impression given by this book is of a harsh, uncompromising and utterly impersonal realism which, to those accustomed to thinking of old Japan in terms of geishas, cherry blossoms and the tea ceremony must be extremely disconcerting. Even many of the "art photographs" of the 1920s are harsh in form and texture.

Japanese attitudes to photography were different from those of China. To start with they both feared it. "Once photographed," ran a Japanese saying, "your shadow will fade; twice photographed, your life will shorten," and if three people were photographed together the middle one would die young. Before long, however, photography was promoted as an aid to modernization and self-improvement. John Thompson in China in the 1860s noted that unlike the Japanese, who often look to one side of the picture, the Chinese refused to be photographed in any pose but full face. Even today Chinese make a little ritual of it, while the photograph, like the printed portrait, has moral overtones: it was common some years ago to be photographed in double exposure kneeling to oneself, to illustrate the Confucian adage "better to implore yourself than anyone else." If the photograph in Japan has any social life, then, it appears in the 1930s, when school-leavers

or business, the purpose of which as Dower notes, is to bind the group together in manifest loyalty.

Superstitions about being photographed lingered on until recent times in China. The painter Chang Dai Chien tells that in the 1940s, a high official in Sichuan, seeing in the ground-glass plate of a portrait camera the image of his stand-in upside down, had the photographer arrested for sorcery. A more important difference lies in Chinese and Japanese attitudes to picture-making in general. Some of the greatest Japanese art is a record of violence or prostitution. If we could imagine a comparable Chinese volume to this, it would consist largely of art photographs—still-lives and landscapes, such as those of Chin San Lang, who combines several negatives to create the effect of a traditional painting, complete with inscription and seals. Lang even claims that he applies to photographs the famous Six Principles of painting of the sixteenth-century critic Xie He.

The influence of painting on photography in this book is not, as one might expect, that of the traditional Tosa and Kanō Schools, but of Monet, Rouault, van Gogh and Dali, following the European influences on twentieth-century Japanese painting. These pictures in the chapter entitled "The Epoch of Development" are so oppressive in tone that it is hard to derive much pleasure from them; rather, they seem to express the defiance of the avant garde of the 1920s and 1930s before it was engulfed in the tide of Japanese militarism. So they, too, are documents in history. After the art photographs, a section on advertisement and propaganda, and ends, as it began, with images of war: horrifying pictures that confront us with the full meaning of the Rape of Nanking; American prisoners at the beginning of the Bataan "death march"; still clean, well-fed, oblivious of what was in store for them; and, inevitably, the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Images of that tranquility for which the Japanese way of life is known abroad are few. Almost the only smile among these myriad faces is the defiant grin of a Chinese woman guerrilla captured in 1938 and no doubt about to face the executioner.

The value of a book such as this lies in great part in the documentary significance of the photographs. The introduction and bibliographical note do their job expertly, but the specialist

This is just one instance of the historical importance of many of these pictures, which might have been brought out in more informative captions. Nevertheless, even without them, the more than 500 photographs, compacted between the gangster images of samurai and the obliteration of Hiroshima, speak eloquently enough of hardship, violence, public and private agony. The cumulative effect is shattering.

## Rooting around

Richard Storry

MARIUS JANSEN

Japan and Its World  
Two Centuries of Change  
128pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £5.30.  
0 691 05310 3

This extremely perceptive work is a collection of lectures delivered to a university audience by one of the most eminent American academic specialists in modern Japanese political history. As Professor Jansen observes in his introduction, "the intellectual and psychological aspects of the Japanese world view have deeper historical roots than the speculations of journalists and pundits". To illustrate what he considers to be the most significant shifts in this world view, Jansen constructs his lectures round the careers and opinions of certain figures whom he regards as particularly interesting, starting with the remarkable Sugita Gempku (1733-1817), a doctor passionately interested in Dutch studies—the Dutch being the channel through which Tokugawa Japan had access to the contemporary European world. It was Sugita who demonstrated from the dissection of a corpse that orthodox Chinese medical theory was fallacious; since it presented a totally wrong picture of the position and shape of organs in the human

body. Sugita's discovery amounted to a serious blow to the prestige of Chinese studies, and therefore a challenge to the Confucian world view. Since Sugita lived to a ripe old age, he was able to promote the development of *rangaku*, "Dutch studies", over many years. It was from this school of intellectuals that the Tokugawa government, when forced to open its doors, recruited the staff of an "Institute of barbarian learning", which stands, indirectly, as the ancestor of Tokyo University.

Subsequent lectures discuss the importance of such personalities as Kume Kunikida (1839-1931) the *rapporteur* of the famous "government learning mission" which toured the world in 1871-73, the late Premier Yoshida, and the present Chairman of International House, Tokyo, Mr Matsumoto Shigeharu. These have been great men, not always successful in their aims, but very influential in the long-run; Japanese society in the post-war years owes them a debt beyond all calculation.

Both a summary and an analysis, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (70pp, Hutchinson. £20. 0 09 1456401), compiled by an anonymous committee composed of some of Japan's leading physicists, physicians and sociologists, is a comprehensive account of the permanent medical, genetic, social and psychological effects caused by the atomic bombs on the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

## The Edogawa Ranpo tradition

By James Melville

MATSUMOTO SEI-ICHI:

*Jumanbun no Ichi no Guzen*

350pp. Tokyo: Bungei Shunju

TENDO SHIN:

*Tohki ni Me Arite*

244pp. Tokyo: Yamata Shobo

NISHIMURA KYOTARO:

*Shuchakueki Satsujin Jiken*

263pp. Tokyo: Kobunsha

YOKOMIZO SEISHI:

*Gokumon Shima*

355pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

YOKOMIZO SEISHI:

*Akuma no Temari Uta*

493pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

NIKI ETSUKO:

*Satsujin Haisen*

214pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

NATSUKI SHIZUKO:

*Johatsu*

420pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

MORIMURA SEI-ICHI:

*Ningen no Shomei*

457pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

OYABU HARUHIKO:

*Chohokuyoku Hakai Han-in*

285pp. Tokyo: Tokuma.

IKUSHIMA JIRO:

*Massatsu Shirei*

215pp. Tokyo: Tokuma.

AKAGAWA JIRO:

*Yurei Rensha*

334pp. Tokyo: Bungei Shunju.

AWASAKA TSUMAO:

*Kotoku no Malsuri*

306pp. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

There are very few bishops in Japan, and Buddhist abbots are not reputed as the Anglican clergy are to have a taste for murder mysteries. Nor are cabinet ministers, who by all accounts spend more time concocting plots than reading about them. It is the renowned "salary man" who is the most avid consumer of crime fiction in Japan, and with his millions of fellows constitutes a colossal market served by dozens of successful writers about whom almost nothing is known in the West.

Edgar Allan Poe's short life had already ended some years before when, in 1845, the Japanese reluctantly resumed international contacts after more than two hundred years of self-imposed quarantine. But very soon after that the author of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* acquired admirers in Japan, and by the early years of this century "detective stories" in the Western style were sufficiently popular to inspire an enterprising young writer to adopt the name of "Edogawa Ranpo", which if said quickly enough sounds remarkably like *Edogawa Aram Po*, which was the best most Japanese could do with the pronunciation of the Master's name.

Be that as it may, young Mr Edogawa's cunning selection of a nom de plume was received with perfectly straight and respectful faces by the Japanese intelligentsia, and he prospered mightily, reigning as undisputed Mr Crime Fiction until his death as recently as 1965. His collected works were put out by the respected Heibonsha publishing house in 1931 when he was still only thirty-seven, and there is a much-coveted Edogawa Ranpo Prize which goes annually to the author of the best first crime novel and more or less assures the winner a lucrative career, provided he or she is prolific enough.

The rewards are considerable. Nearly 200 million Japanese live in a society with one of the highest literacy rates in the world. They are book-buyers, not borrowers, and along with science fiction they love to read what are variously called *suri shosetsu* (novels of reasoning), *terai shosetsu* (detective stories) or simply *misteri* or *krimi* from the English. Whodunits as a group are known as *pazurua* (puzzlers), while thrillers derived from the Fleming school are classified as *hondo-boirodo* (hard-boiled), and are likely to be adorned with his-men firing guns in the manner of James Bond, or foreign girls removing the bottom halves of their bikinis.

Print orders are of a size to make all but the blockbuster best-selling authors of the West gasp in envy. An established Japanese crime writer will have his new book serialized in one of the many weekly or monthly magazines, even occasionally in a daily paper. The first hard-cover edition will be of about 10,000 copies, and the paperback will soon be on every bookshelf on the subway and commuter line stations in an edition of perhaps a quarter of a million. Writers in the premier league will double those numbers, and most amazingly of all, will in all probability produce three or four books a year.

The man who inherited the mantle of Edogawa Ranpo and is the most senior and the most generally admired writer in the field is Matsumoto Sei-ichi, who was born in 1910 in a rural area, and whose prolific output has by now means been confined to crime fiction. He is a considerable stylist, though the spare, allusive nature of his prose poses many problems for translators, and is inclined to emerge as flat and lifeless in the few English translations which have been made.

Mr Matsumoto's latest crime novel is *Jumanbun no Ichi no Guzen* (A Chance in a Million). Literally, *Jumanbun* means 100,000th, but one of the minor hazards of life for foreigners in Japan is getting in a muddle over numbers, and the sense of the title is preserved. In his new book

Although women writers of crime fiction are not represented so strongly in Japan as in the West there can be no doubt about the security of the reputation of Niki Etsuko, sometimes known as Japan's Agatha Christie for no very obvious reason except that of her gender, and the fact that she writes "puzzlers" which command the respectful attention of her senior colleagues in the profession. Miss Niki proves herself no mean electrician in her latest brain-cracker, *Satsujin Haisen* (*Wiring Diagram for Murder*), in which a journalist called Yoshimura investigates at the request of an old University friend the apparently accidental death of a relative, the father of a three-year-old girl, who may not have fallen by accident from a third-floor verandah as the police concluded.

Natsuki Shizuko is another successful woman crime writer, with a sharp line in social comment. In recent years her best book has probably been *Johatsu* (*Evaporation*). The initial inspiration derived from this book, subtitled "The End of a Love", is that it may turn out to be a tear-jerker for the women's magazines; but as yet another journalist looks into the disappearance of a woman to whom he was linked sexually the reader is helped towards new and interesting insights into human relationships in contemporary Japan.

Social comment of a different kind is to be found in a good novel by Morimura Sei-ichi, who was born in 1933 and is a winner of the Edogawa Ranpo Prize. His early adult life was coloured as for all Japanese of his generation by the American Occupation, and in *Ningen no Shomei* (*Proof of Humanity*) Mr Morimura touches on the doubly sensitive subject of race relations and the American military presence. His story begins as diners in the glossy penthouse restaurant of a high-class hotel see the doors of the lift open and a few new arrivals emerge, leaving behind a young black man with a glassy expression and a knife in his chest. Police Detective Munegane discovers that this is far from being the most dramatic aspect of the case, whose action subsequently ranges from a Japanese hot-spring resort to New York.

Japanese are great globe-trotters, and believe that the next best thing to the exotic places is to read about them. Members of the hard-boiled school of writers not only offer their readers liberal helpings of violence and cinematically fantasized sex, but almost always set their stories outside Japan. In *Chohokuyoku Hakai Han-in* (*The Intelligence Bureau Elimination Operative*) Oyabu Haruhiko spins a lively but improbable tale of stalking and post-shooting with an AR-15 rifle among coroneted heads in Monte Carlo, embellished with the dormant Throne of Carpathia, the Grand Prix car race and a good deal of Old Crow bourbon whisky. On the other hand Ikushima Jiro in *Massatsu Shirei* (*Order to Liquidate*) favours Martinis by the poolside in Bangkok and quick dashes to Hong Kong and Las Vegas against a disconcertingly credible background of crooked Japanese politicians, gambling debts and murderous competition for tourist concessions.

Two new writers of Japanese crime fiction are Akagawa Jiro and

Noriko, who is trying to forget an unhappy love affair by losing herself on a trip to the mountains. Who is the mystery man with whom she spends a night in a tiny village? The atmosphere of this novel is created through observation of externals rather than psychological insight, and tension is maintained by the neat construction of the whole.

There is little which is distinctively Japanese about the crime fiction which the Tokyo or Osaka "salary man" enjoys, apart from the language in which it is written and the local colour involved. Sex, greed, jealousy and fear are the mainstays of motive, though revenge can also figure, perhaps more largely than in the Western version of the genre. Fictional investigators seem to employ the same mixture of observation, deduction and intuition as their American and European counterparts, and depend just as much on lucky breaks. The Japanese taste, like the British, inclines towards comfortable middle class settings, a notch or two up the social scale from that of the majority of readers, and it is served by writers who are in the main products of that same environment, generally offering a good read.

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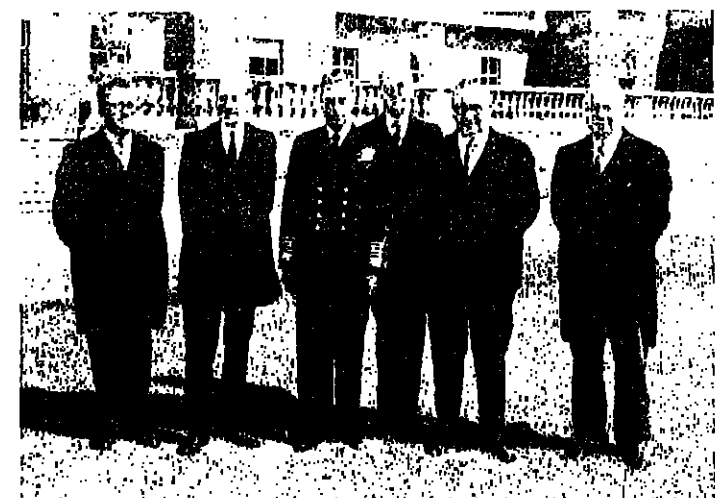
### Loving your class enemies

By Kenneth O. Morgan

Country  
BBC TV

The road to 1945 is well trodden at present. It is common ground between Tony Benn, Denis Healey and the SDP that the Attlee years ushered in some kind of social revolution. Mr Benn hails the hold radical credentials of a democratic socialist government in which his own father was prominent. Dr Owen sees Attlee and his colleagues as launching the Butskellite Keynesian consensus so rudely disturbed by Thatcherism and Bennery today. It is only appropriate that playwrights, too, should offer their own gloss on this supposedly halcyon age.

Trevor Griffiths's television play, *Country*, is set against the background of the Labour election landslide in 1945. The Communist Phil Piratin's return for Mile End is faithfully included. Political upheaval is projected against the internal turmoil of a brewing dynasty of suitably distasteful character, and the desperate efforts of Sir Frederick Carleton (Leo McKern) to secure the succession, as managing director and chairman, for his white-suited black sheep of a son, the homosexual, non-soldiering anti-hero, Philip (James Fox). There is a measured stillness about the family exchanges deliberately contrasted with an outside world convulsed by social conflict. "The people have declared war on us", one Carleton declares, as revolting Kentish peasants occupy, and then burn down, the family estates and let loose the horses all over the grounds. Even the police are on the side of the common people, up to a point. In the end, predictably enough, Philip triumphs over the man-eating malice of sister-in-law Alice (Jill Bennett), the scepticism of his mother (Wendy Hiller), and the sullen hostility of fellow directors. The Carletons brace themselves to survive, to refloat the "sinking ship" of capitalism, weighed down with rats and plunder. On July



The 1945 Socialist Revolution: King George VI and his Cabinet (left to right: Herbert Morrison, Clement Attlee, the King, Arthur Greenwood, Ernest Bevin and A. V. Alexander) on the terrace of Buckingham Palace.

27, 1945, one day after the deluge, the fight back has begun.

It is easy to see why this superbly-paced production won such instant acclaim from television critics. The interaction of characters is quite gripping. James Fox's wispy steeliness as Philip countered by both the death-bed brutality of his father, the disenchanted dotiness of his mother and the carnivorous qualities of his sister-in-law; and Joan Greenwood and Deborah Norton, also shining in a firmament of *déjà* females. Only Virginia (well acted by Penelope Wilton), a kind of updated Medusa exiled in France and of Communist inclinations, proclaiming the imminent and bloody end of capitalism with "the people banging on the door", does not quite ring true. The direction, concentrating on stylized conversation pieces of Chekhovian quality, is masterly in its control, while Nat Crosby's photography is haunting. It is clear, in fact, that producer, director and cameraman are enchanted by the class enemy. The disintegrating Carletons offer as beguiling a defence of the rotting world of the declining

generacy as does Brideshead on the rival channel. James Fox's Flyte-like stammer and preciosity provide their own justification and charm. They also contribute to exciting and moving television.

Whether any of this bears much relation to the Labour victory in 1945 is quite another matter. Trevor Griffiths seems to take his cue from Evelyn Waugh - "It feels as if we are under enemy occupation". The reality was different, and the Carletons know it already. The inclusion in the play of Labour's election manifesto (with such bloodthirsty proposals as the nationalizing of the Bank of England, which even Churchill supported), the reproduction of Attlee's family-solicitor tones on victory night, telling jubilant Labour voters of the need for discipline and self-sacrifice, show how the Labour triumph was some way short of an apocalypse.

The Carletons, in their country-house cocoon, seem to have been propelled in from another planet, so total is their insulation. The war of 1939-45 apparently never happened

for them, apart from a few tired remarks about injuries at the hands of "Jerry" and incoherent mutterings about India. The social changes of wartime, with their taxes, rationing, Beveridge scheme and evacuees, somehow affected forty million other people, but not them. The fictional background of a popular *jacquerie*, symbolized by besotted, dirty hop-pickers rising up against the beaure, would have been appropriate for 1789 but hardly for the realistic, dogged mood of 1945. But like other historically-based television ventures, this work simply isn't historical.

Nor can it really be claimed to be, in any serious way, social comment or analysis. Mr Griffiths has prefaced his play with radical utterances in the newspapers about the coming social revolution, somewhat loosely defined. "I'm sick of broad churches", he has declared. In fact, his play is largely innocent of Marxism or almost any other variant of socialism. It has nothing to say about class relationships or the economic system. As a Welsh Mancunian, Griffiths hates large country houses and idle, parasitical horsey gentry, public schools and vicars, adulterous army officers and adulterated beer. So do many of us. On the other hand, as with other purported critics, it is the rich who fascinate him, with their confident ritual and hermetic inpenetrability, the rich who are always with us. Like many another nuck-raker, his tract for the times is inadvertently written in praise of the robber barons. The Marxist playwright, like the New Left dramatist of the "glittering coffin" of the 1960s, is now in some danger of becoming the licensed rebel of the establishment. Instead of the grave-digger of the bourgeoisie, he is the darling of the halls. No more enchanting vision of our late-capitalist society has been presented than by this socialist propagandist. But, then, we may passionately celebrate the virtues of capitalism was ever written in that *Das Kapital* by the old master himself.

*Country: A Tory Story* is published by Faber (62pp. £3.95 paperback. 0 571 81885 2).

### Lunatics, lovers, poets

By Julie Hankey

Shakespeare after the Romantics  
Riverside Studios

*Shakespeare after the Romantics* is an ambiguous title but a carefully chosen one. In an evening of readings from both the Elizabethan and Romantic periods, the latest was a reminiscence about Wordsworth in France before the Revolution, written by de Quincey in 1839. Yet the juxtaposition of periods did not give us Shakespeare through the eyes of the Romantics - after - in the sense of "according to". None of the quotations were specifically about him, though there would, of course, have been plenty of scope for that.

What the selections from the Romantics hoped to do was to remind us - who live in an age, so the programme notes say, similarly hard-fac'd - of their largeness of spirit, from which, it is suggested, both we and our reading of Shakespeare can profit. It sounds like killing too many birds with one stone, and one was reminded of Keats's advice to Shelley to curb his magnanimity if he wanted to write poetry. But to those bracing themselves for a searching reappraisal of Shakespeare in the light, say, of Keats's *Negative Capability* or Coleridge's ideas on the imagination, the looser, vaguer associations were somewhat irritating. Mary Wollstonecraft writing fiercely about the insipidity of virtuous females in novels, or Keats raving a little about "the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents as

materials to form greater things" are cheering, and Thesaur's lunatic, lover and poet do breathe the same air.

But Shakespeare could, I think, have carried the director (David Leveaux's) point on his own. Nothing essential was imparted to Shakespeare by the context into which he was put, however congenial it may have been. The very fact of extraction pointed out to the director wanted us to notice the Shakespeare, and which in any particular play as a whole might seem, in Johnson's words, to drop casually from him. Shakespeare's vision of Man's "little brief authority" that "skins the vice of the top" doesn't need to be linked up with reactionary England after the Revolution to come home to us now. Nor is *Timon*'s despair more bleak for being placed near Coleridge's *Making that analogy serve to understand Shakespeare at certain moments but it does not give him new wings.*

Certainly it was in the Shakespeare scenes that the actors had their real chance, and they proved again how moving, bare and simple rendering can be. When anything aridly crypt in, for example when Susie Breakell mimed a little as Viola, the tension instantly slackened. The simplest performances came from Mary Zuckerman, whose unhurried voice rode the scenes effortlessly, "on and to the line" as Shaw wisely advised. Whether or not a full-length performance, or a larger house, would need something tauter, her repose in the readings was right. The test was never, but rawness without art is no bad thing, and the tears on Caroline Embury's face, as Timon's loyal steward, were real.

### A ramble with Borrow

By Andrew Motion

George Borrow: a century lecture  
Cheltenham Festival of Literature

Eliot praised the Metaphysicals partly because he felt they anticipated his belief that a modern poet had to be "difficult". No dissociation of sensibility prevented him from proposing similarities between his own and the earlier culture. Sometimes it is hard not to feel that the rural revivals of our own day have been made with an eye less to compatibility than to consolation. The recent and genuinely literary interest in the work of writers like Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies and W. H. Hudson has been accompanied by a good deal of longing for their supposedly better days.

1981 is the centenary of George Borrow's death, so there is good reason for celebrating him. But it is surprising that he has not found a more prominent place on the rural bandwagon before now. Much of his writing exhibits traces of the semi-mystical communion with nature which is fashionable these days, he was the subject of a biography by Edward Thomas, and the good attendance at Enoch Powell's lecture at the Cheltenham Festival testified to considerable public interest, though it was difficult to tell whether in the speaker or the subject. Powell's approach was, unmistakably, a manifestation of the Right Wing for Rural Writers movement; it evoked the pastoral past of Borrow's England as a golden age, gloomily asking himself and failing to answer

"Whether the people of England will discover themselves again" and whether, if they do, "their country will still be there for them discover".

The other main reason for Powell's championing of Borrow was immeasurably more attractive. Powell was born in 1912, when Borrow's reputation was enjoying its last spasm of health, and cannot, he said, "remember a time before I knew the works... I could reel off complete slabs from memory." His enthusiasm was initially of his father's making: the family had caught the contemporary craze for walking expeditions - "poking around the countryside - in semi-vagrant guise" - on which Borrow was an ideal guide. In addition to precise observation and engagingly oblique narratives, he could provide, on occasion, models of a plain but suggestive style. Powell quoted a passage from *Lavengro* where the narrator asks a publican's maid to work the pump while he washes: "Thereupon Jenny, placing the towel on a linen-horse, took the handle of the pump with both hands and pumped over my head as hard as my head, my face, and my hair down upon the brick floor." The symbolic aspect of this scene seemed not to have struck Powell, and generally for a century talk one might have expected something more challenging. After reprising Borrow for his outbursts of gushing rhetoric and his ugly polemics against Popery, Powell gave himself over to eulogy. And while his childhood affection remained undiminished, it was clouded by adult nostalgia which threatened to distort its object.

## commentary

### From the ivory toad to the six-door tiger

By Carmen Blacker

The Great Japan Exhibition  
Art of the Edo Period 1600-1868  
Royal Academy

The planners of this brilliant event doubtless had in mind the need to shatter the stereotyped images of Japan and Japanese art still deplorably prevalent among large sections of the British public. Japanese art, they are insisting, is not confined to the objects brought to this country a century ago, which vitalized and inspired the aesthetic movement of the 1880s and with an odd persistence have governed ever since our taste in matters Japanese. Japanese art between 1600 and 1868 is not confined to woodblock prints, ornamental fans, blue and white china, sword-guards, netsuke and Satsuma buttons. Far grander, far more splendid, grave and profound things are to be discovered if once we lift our gaze from the conventional view.

What is provided is a rare and magnificent display of treasures, the like of which has never before been assembled in this country. Some of these exquisite things have never left Japan before. Some come from private collections, including that of the Emperor, and are rarely exposed to the public gaze. All convey a brilliance, a lavishness, a peculiar force rarely experienced in an exhibition and which communicates to us something of the vitality and energy of the period when they were created.

Again, we have always believed that Japanese art was small. We knew that the Japanese could carve a perfect toad and waterlily, for example, on the small piece of ivory necessary to keep a belt in place. We did not realize that they could also create works of a size that even in the large galleries of the Royal Academy appear immense. Thus, most of the treasures in this exhibition are large. There are enormous brilliant screens, hanging scrolls fifteen feet high, perpendicular calligraphy done with a brush apparently the size of a broom.

There are a good many large folding screens, of six or eight leaves, which spread out occupy nearly a whole wall. Several depict tigers, magical beasts never seen in the flesh in Japan and known only through Chinese painting and myth. They appear among bamboo groves, for tigers must always be accompanied by bamboo as must lions by peonies. There is the beautiful golden work by Kanô Sanraku, from the *Yankin* temple in Kyoto which is usually closed to the public; it depicts two enchanting tigers, a cub playing with its mother's tail and,

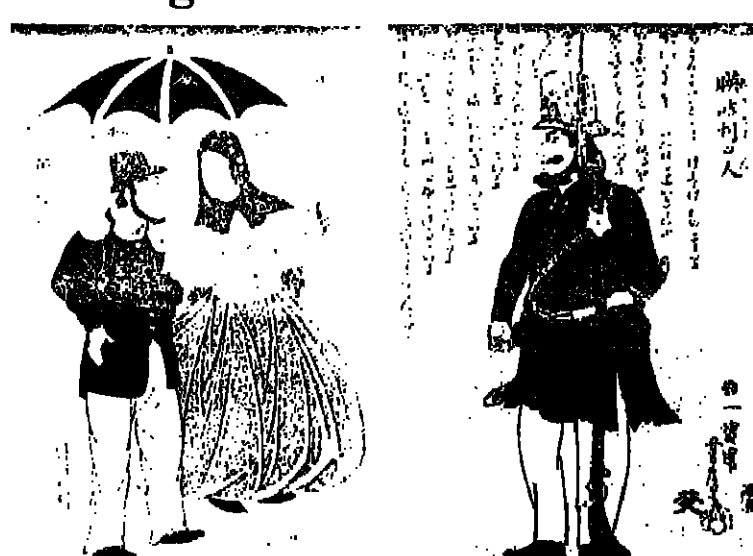
amidst the bamboo grove with its succulent sprouts, a leopard with quincunx spots. And there is the gigantic tiger by Nagasawa Rosetsu, covering a set of six sliding doors from the Muryôji temple in Wakayama, who leaps towards you as you gaze, his paws locked together in a watchspring pounce.

There is a splendid array of hanging paintings, particularly the four by Jakuchû, lent by the Emperor himself. There is an almost visionary brilliance in the white and silver chrysanthemum flowers disposed round a blue winding stream in a manner which is neither representational nor abstract but which conveys the sense of a world of its own; in the thirteen cocks, with their red combs and their magnificent black and white feathers, and in the red maple leaves with two birds, blue and white, perching on the twigs. There are some black and white paintings by the Zen master Hakuin, who resuscitated Japanese Zen during the eighteenth century; a huge and ferocious face of Daruma with staring eyes and above, in masterly calligraphy, the couplet, "point directly at the heart of man, this very nature is Buddha". And a perpendicular scroll, in huge and terrific calligraphy, the five characters for "one arrow breaks through three barriers".

There is also the kimono. Our own stereotype here begins in the 1920s, with the lurid and floppy garments incorrectly worn by Noel Coward heroines in their bedrooms. Here is a room of kimono of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which can be considered archetypal, so ingenious are the designs. There is one which is a profusion of pilgrim hats, crosshatched, among maple leaves; another which is a blue river meandering through a parterre of tiny flowers; another which is a cascade of fans intermingled with the cursive script of a poem.

There are two suits of armour, one said to have been worn by the Shôgun Yoshimune, with an immense helmet crested with a golden dragon and a neck guard in seven layers. And a *kago* or ceremonial palanquin, made for the wedding of the Shôgun Taunayoshi in 1664, all gold lacquer bamboo and hollyhocks, and a small grille window through which its august occupant could look out.

At first glance there is a curious absence of religious art. Not a single bodhisattva, not one esoteric mandala. But probably the planners thought we knew about bronze Buddhas. Instead they give us twelve astonishing wooden figures by the ascetic wandering monk Enkû. Enkû belonged to a religious order whose members were vowed to homelessness. For most of their lives they



The English as seen by the Japanese in the mid nineteenth century: a couple with an umbrella by Utagawa Yoshitora, and a soldier by Ipposai Yoshifusa. Both come from the exhibition reviewed here and are illustrated in its catalogue, edited by William Watson (365 pp. Royal Academy / Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Paperback £5.90 at the exhibition. £9.95 from bookshops. 0 297 78035 2. Hardback £17.50 from bookshops only. 0 297 78027 1). The catalogue is richly illustrated and includes essays on Japan's politics and foreign relations in the period by W. G. Beasley, on its social and economic history by Masahide Bito, and on its art by William Watson.

wandered throughout Japan, reciting sutras, eating only the products of trees and pausing only for excruciatingly cold sojourns in remote caves. Some of them left behind them as they travelled a trail of carved wooden Buddhas, but no one else shows the genius of Enkû. His figures have a special archaic smile, an otherworldly joyousness. The stiff stand-up hair now recalls the feathers of some being from another plane. They were not carved in a warm comfortable workshop, but probably

in an icy and inaccessible cave high in the mountains. Only circumstances such as these account for the weird and uncanny power which the figures generate.

These carved figures, set in the midst of the golden screens and scrolls which embellished the mansions of *daimyô*, remind us that there were still men in Japan at this time dedicated to an altogether different way of life and to the spiritual quest. They too produced things of beauty.

### Dramatic disunities

By Alan Jenkins

The Molds  
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

It's unlikely that Jean Genet took his measure from Jean Racine; but in *The Molds* it may not be inappropriate to detect a Racinean element, albeit inverted. Racine's tragic figures suffer under an intolerable burden of silence, of self-restraint; desiring the impossible, they are forced to express the unutterable. Since their every actual utterance is governed by the formal constraints imposed by the alexandrine couplet, Racine had no need to do more than hint at other kinds of constraint: confinement, enforced reticence and the oppressive weight of the unsaid are built into his dramatic unities and the movement of his lines. Some months ago a remarkable production in English of *Briarcliff* at the Lyric Studio managed to convey this brooding, oppressive intensity, and with it the essential force and beauty of Racinean tragedy, by adopting the ceremonial movement of the English hexameter line as the basis of the translation. Now the same theatre's production of *The Molds*, directed by Clare Davidson, reveals a Genet who is all too easily lost or obscured by being subjected to well-meaning academic interest or general "acceptance".

*The Molds* is outrageous in conception, direct in execution. Solange and Claire also are constrained by their existences as maids, and because they are locked in a self-punishing cycle of mutual dependence, need and barely-suppressed hatred - feelings which are transferred, too, to their all-dominating, leashed and adored Madame. But they, unlike Racine's characters, are condemned to express everything; and to re-enact endlessly their erotic pantomime which mounts steadily and

hopelessly towards a perpetually deferred, inaccessible climax. The ultimate in sexual "role-playing", their sado-masochistic performances are also the only opportunity they have to be themselves - such selves as remain to them, twisted out of recognition by the systematic removal of every freedom. Deprived of identity - or more than this, of subjectivity - they rediscover an "existence" only in play-acting, in the rehearsal of desire and self-abnegation.

This bizarre and painful relation of master/mistress, slave/maid is complicated and enriched, in this production, by the casting of male actors in all three female roles, in accordance with Genet's original wishes for the play. Exaggeratedly "feminine" in their every gesture and inflection, the two drag-artist maids cajole, bully and seduce each other towards a murder and/or suicide that is the only possible escape from (and confirmation of) their despair; their mistress, flamboyantly heartless, and the ever-present though unseen Monsieur, effortlessly, unknowingly confirming every signal which denies them a right to live. The play is revitalized as an exploration of the condition of the servant, of its incessant and intolerable contradictions: extremes of "luxury and filth", sainthood and criminality.

It is also, in the performances of Read Rawl (pouting and swallowing back the sob perhaps a shade too often), the waspish and sinister John Dicks, and the seductively glamorous Mark Rylance, an exploration (as Sartre long ago pointed out, as Lacan would have recognized, and as the general existential psychoanalytical emphasis of the production makes abundantly clear) of every shade overt and implicit, transsexual being only the most obvious - "of deviant" sexuality: of what it is like to desire above everything else to be something you cannot be. This is a fiercer, more claustrophobic, and, curiously, a more humane *Molds* than most.

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## The Booker Prize: matters of judgment

By Hermione Lee

A small flurry of publicity surrounded the final stages of this year's Booker McConnell prize. It did little for the standing of Britain's most prestigious award for fiction, but it raised some interesting questions. Should the judging procedures for such a prize be confidential? Do the British media give the right sort of attention to literary prizes? Does this major award do any good (apart from the prizewinner's cheque) to novelists, as opposed to publishers, judges, Booker McConnell and the National Book League? Does the British public read more novels, or pay more attention to fiction, because of this prize? Local issues were raised, too. Was one of the judges, who lanked out deliberations in mid-course, opportunistically cashing in on his role? Were his agent, and the literary editor of the *Guardian*, who printed his revelations, acting unscrupulously? Should the NBL have acted more firmly to prevent him?

The gossip which spread after the announcement of the short-list was fuelled from various quarters. The *Bookseller's* columnist Quentin Oates suggested that the short-list represented a failure to reach a consensus, a motley collection of un-reconciled preferences. *Private Eye*, which has it in for what it calls "the idiotic Booker Prize", said that Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* was only there because Malcolm Bradbury, the chairman, had taught him, and that Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* would win (as it did) because novels set in India regularly win Britain's top literary awards.

Brian Aldiss's detailed and highly personal account of our judging procedures celebrated the high quality of the year's novels, praised several of the "near-misses", and lamented the media's lack of interest. But it also gave the impression that our discussions were arbitrary, named some of the novels disliked, and implied, wrongly, that McEwan had been slipped onto the short list at the last moment. This rumour had hardened into "fact" by the time Hunter Davies covered the prize in *The Times* the day before the announcement, and was repeated by Robert Kee ("we also know that Ian McEwan's book only just scraped onto the short list") during the BBC's televising of the award. Aldiss claimed that the list rejected large ambitious novels in favour of slight "anorexic" ones, and he revealed his unhappiness with three of the short-listed novels.

Bradbury responded with a reproving letter to the *Guardian*, regretting the breach of confidentiality and praising the short-list in his own critical terms: "All are genuinely self-conscious fictions, doing what good novels should: advancing and inquiring into our awareness of how we name and structure our fictions and our so-called truths." Outside the book pages, the British press finds it hard to take literary controversy seriously, and *The Sunday Times* stepped in with a trivialising report ("But Malcolm didn't like it. Secrets were secrets", etc) which printed a list it called "THE RUNNERS-UP" of seven novels (which had certainly not been liked by all the judges), and predicted D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* as the winner. Aldiss wrote the following week to make it clear that "THE RUNNERS-UP" were only his runners-up (and, in fact, this list of his had changed since our meetings). Hilary Rubinstein, Aldiss's agent, suggested in a letter to *The Sunday Times* that the judges' deliberations should be broadcast or televised.

Some false impressions have arisen from all this, and the record needs to be put straight on certain points. Ian McEwan's novel, admired by four of the five judges, was constantly brought in when the short-list was being selected. Bradbury made his personal connection clear, this was discussed and, as far as was humanly possible, set aside. Rushdie is not the winner because his novel is set in India (though, obviously, it is a country which has inspired much considerable fiction) but because it is a magnificent novel about India. The

short-list was not biased towards slight books (Rushdie and Lessing would not have been there if it had been) but towards novels which were as good as they could be within their own terms.

Our procedures were conscientious. Over the summer we read seventy-three novels, and these involved every imaginable genre: thrillers, historical and regional novels, sea stories, school novels, novels about the writing of novels, science-fiction, fairy tales, realist documents, "post-modernist" soliloquies and political fables. My greatest difficulty, and the source of my deepest uncertainty about the value of the whole undertaking, was in having to compare works of such entirely different kinds. But it was also a source of satisfaction that the term "novel" is being persistently re-defined.

In a succession of meetings, during which we discussed every one of the seventy-three, we narrowed the list down to a "long" list of under twenty. These were strongly supported by at least two, and usually more than two, of the judges. This list was a rich and interesting mixture of distinguished writers (Nadine Gordimer, Brian Moore, Michael Moorcock) and of little-known or relatively new novelists. With the former, we had to distinguish carefully our sense of the writer's whole *opus* from our judgments of this year's novel. With the latter, we had to be wary of exaggerating the claims of a novel because it felt like a new discovery. Our decisions about the short-list were taken regardless of previous short-lists or of established reputations; and we were looking for a winner that would be, as the chairman put it, "a book that should be read in twenty years' time". There was strong support among the judges (this is now no secret) for, in alphabetical order, John Banville's *Kepler*, William Boyd's *A Good Man in Africa*, Maggie Gee's *Dying in Other Words*, Nadine Gordimer's *Jubilee*, Michael Moorcock's *Byzantium Endures*, Christopher Priest's *The Affirmation*, Peter Paul Read's *The Villa Gollitsyn*, Graham Swift's *Shuttlecock*, and A. N. Wilson's *Who Was Oswald Fish?* Of all the novels which we regretfully set aside, Brian Moore's *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* came closest to the short-list. But, as Bradbury said in his *Guardian* letter, our discussions were not just a matter of votes and lists.

Not only because it made our procedures sound dismissive and gave ammunition to the "idiotic Booker prize" school of thought, but for other reasons too, Aldiss's article did no good (though this was the opposite of his intention) to the novelists. It was not helpful to single out novels we had all disliked. Some of the publishers certainly seemed ill-advised as to their submissions, but the novelists should not have to suffer for that. It was improper to disclose which of the short-listed novels he disliked: surely any committee judges, in spite of inevitable differences, should try to produce an agreed result? And, simply, it was a breach of faith: confidentiality had been required of all the judges. It might in future need to be required in writing, and payment of the judge's fee might be condition upon its being maintained.

But why confidentiality? I had already reviewed some of the novels in the *Observer*, and that situation of a judge wearing another hat is behind closed doors; judges will tell scurrilous stories about the novelists (or their own) secret lives – though, naturally, if no one is thought to be taking notes under the table, jokes will be made and prejudices will be

aired. But persuasion and argument, as well as the delivering of critical opinions, are in process. The judges must be able to feel that they can speak freely, that they needn't measure their words, that they can change their minds, or be rude about a book they feel is being overpraised, or even admit that they haven't been able to finish a book, and be sent away to try again. That level of honesty can't, I think, be maintained if the discussion is taking place in public, or is going to be made public. Confidentiality protects the judges from pressure: persuasion could be brought to bear on a judge known to be teetering on the brink of a final choice. Confidentiality (as with job selection committees) protects the "candidate" from unnecessary pain. No novelist wants to have derogatory opinions bruited about because they are not on the short-list of a prize for which they did not even enter themselves.

Most importantly, if the short-list discussions were to be published or broadcast, attention would focus on the judges rather than the novelists. No one could resist wanting to appear wittier, more authoritative, more sympathetic than their colleagues. And public judgment on the discussions would inevitably be distorted, unless everyone who followed them had also read all the seventy or so novels submitted for the prize. More good – crudely, more sales – would come of interviews with winners and short-listed novelists, of broadcast or televised discussions of the final list, and of paperback editions resulting from the nominations. This is, after all, Britain's only major literary award. It is a prize which matters. It does make a great difference to one novelist every year, it does increase sales, it does attract attention to fiction in Britain, and it ought to be taken seriously. This year alone, the range, the excellence and the unexpectedness of the nominations are very exciting; these novels ought to be read widely, and they will be.

Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour* (Deutsch) – again, I am keeping to alphabetical order – marked the return of an Anglo-Irish writer, now in her seventies, who between 1928 and 1961 wrote novels and plays under the pseudonym M. J. Farrell. Aaron St Charles narrates the story of her "Big House" childhood – marvellously recorded – with a self-absorbed imperceptiveness which, gradually, makes it apparent that this is much more than a witty, accomplished piece of Anglo-Irish nostalgia. It is a novel about neglect and revenge, which sinisterly and brilliantly undermines its own conventions.

*The Strain Experiments* (Cape) is the third in Doris Lessing's novel-sequel *Canopus in Argos: Archives*, though it can be read in isolation. It is narrated by Ambion II, a (female) public official who slowly begins to understand, over the millennia spanned by the book, the ways in which society – particularly a colonizing society – really works, and the hidden patterns which control human behaviour. Though Lessing's writing is clumsy and laborious – she uses prose as a wheelbarrow in which she trundles around her ideas – and her insistent polemical methods can't be to everyone's taste, she has the satirist's power of making things at once strange and familiar, and she is without question stretching the capacities of the English novel.

*The Comfort of Strangers* (Cape) is Ian McEwan's second novel, spare, cool and alarming, which places a young middle-class English couple, on holiday in Venice (though the city is made strange by being unnamed), in an extreme situation which seems inevitably to take them over and to enact everything they have suppressed in their own indecisive, inarticulate, liberal relationship. The short novel proceeds with an extraordinary combination of stillness and speed, inertia and violence, as though it were a series of film shots in which the city and the couple are "framed". McEwan's novel incorporates (though it's not centrally con-

cerned with) a feminist argument; a brutal, paternalistic Mediterranean family tradition is described, in a brilliant story-within-the-story, as a threat to the half-achieved ideas of sexual equality which the English couple try to discuss.

There is also, in a very different way, a muted feminism underlying Ann Schlee's quiet, elegant, exact novel *Rhine Journey*. This very subtly sets in a historical framework – an English family "doing" the Rhine in 1851 – the confined existence, the struggle for independence and the sexual fantasies of an unmarried woman in her late thirties. Her name is Charlotte, and the novel lovingly invokes Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. But to describe this as merely a delicate period piece is not enough: the workings of Charlotte's imagination are deep and unsettling.

Muriel Spark's *Loitering with Intent*, stylish, cold, funny, self-celebrating, gleeful, is a gulfed fab about writing, autobiography inferior to her husband. The prejudicial legend still persists. One historian from Mr Weber's own University of California has suggested that the achievement was the result of Pierre's brilliant mind – along with a useful contribution from Marie's hands.

I have looked for, and failed to find, any evidence to support the view that in the work (with Beccuere) for which they were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize, Pierre Curie played the dominant scientific role. All available evidence suggests, particularly to anybody who has worked in a collaborative role in a laboratory, that their work – as a physicist, she as chemist – was complementary and that the equal apportionment of honour was just. But what cannot be denied is the extraordinary circumstance of the award in 1911 of the second Nobel Prize to Marie Curie alone. No amount of permutation of the words in which the prize was couched can alter the fact that she was given the award twice for the same work. Far from showing prejudice against the sole distinguished woman in their group, her male scientific colleagues reacted so strongly against both her rejection by the Académie des Sciences and by the prize campaign which exposed her affair with the physicist Paul Langevin that, for the first time in the award's history,

The analogies for Rushdie are part English (Sterne, Fielding), part cosmopolitan (Günter Grass, Gabriel García Márquez). Rushdie's narrator Saleem calls himself a "miniaturist elephantiasis", and his twentieth-century Indian epic, at once wildly fantastical and in grim political earnest, is mixed and spiced like Saleem's own bottles of chutney.

That the prize was won by a novel about India points to the current adventuring of English-language fictions. I first read Salman Rushdie in an extract from *Midnight's Children* printed in the February edition of the magazine *Granta*, alongside passages from Russell Hoban, Emma Tennant, Angela Carter and other writers who through linguistic brio and a passion for myth, fantasy, folklore, magic, are invading the novel with a fresh, strange language. Reading for the Booker prize leaves me haunted by a hundred images not found before, not to be forgotten: dragonhide growing on the inhabitants of the dark city of Unthank in *Landark*; the immortality in *The Affirmation* where the imprisoned prize-winner, Kepler, dreaming among his cups of the world's perfect order; Brian Moore's rich middle-aged businessman running, beside himself with love, through the sad ordinariness of a London park; the terrible falling of bodies seen from the windows of the white hotel; a perforated sheet through which, piece by piece, a Kashmiri doctor falls in love with his future wife... It has been, for all its irritations and demands, a great feast, a treat, a passionately interesting job.

### Marie Curie

Sir, – In his perceptive review of Françoise Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (October 9), Eugen Weber reaches correct conclusions concerning Marie Curie's emergence as a scientific figure of some consequence. If Marie Curie has become a heroine of the feminist cause, it has not been of her making. She expected no concessions to her sex, but she was not affronted when she received any. She found no difficulty in treating her contemporaries in chemistry and physics as equals. Those who knew her well (and Ernest Rutherford was certainly one) had no doubts that her contribution to the identification and separation of polonium and radium was equal to that of Pierre Curie.

It is nevertheless noteworthy that those who knew her less well automatically assumed that, being a woman, she must have played a role inferior to her husband. The prejudicial legend still persists. One historian from Mr Weber's own University of California has suggested that the achievement was the result of Pierre's brilliant mind – along with a useful contribution from Marie's hands.

I have looked for, and failed to find, any evidence to support the view that in the work (with Beccuere) for which they were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize, Pierre Curie played the dominant scientific role. All available evidence suggests, particularly to anybody who has worked in a collaborative role in a laboratory, that their work – as a physicist, she as chemist – was complementary and that the equal apportionment of honour was just.

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## to the editor

they thrust a second Nobel medal her way. The swell of sympathy had occurred simply because she was a woman.

There is no real evidence that the work she had done since 1902, though of high quality, was either so original or so exceptional as to merit her glittering prize. On the other hand, there is no reason to suspect that she thought other than it was richly deserved.

ROBERT REID,

51 Westcroft Square, London W9 6TA.

### Pushkin and Lermontov

Sir, – I am not doubting that the Neva, like all great rivers, pulses. The point I was trying to make in my review of Sir Charles Johnston's new book (October 2) was that any attempt to find equivalent feminine rhymes, in English, for Pushkin's austere masterpiece, *The Bronze Horseman*, was bound to sound strained at times. Sir Charles needed a rhyme for "creation": since he is a sensitive poet, he found a truthful word: I cannot think that there is a better. Yet the reader cannot but be conscious of the translator's skill and effort (especially as "pulsation" is preceded by an archaic syllable in "majestical", to achieve the tetrameter). The simplicity of Pushkin's "New's majestic flow" is inevitably sacrificed, for an "exact" metrical equivalent; and I question whether the cost is not too high, in this particular instance. Rhymes and metre are not as close to the inner core of *The Bronze Horseman* as they are in *Eugene Onegin*, so marvellously translated by Sir Charles. In the art of translation, as he knows as well as any, it is always a question of balancing gains and losses. I say again that his is the best metrical version of the great Russian poem that I have read.

I did not mean to suggest that I thought Marie Duplessis had syphilis, merely that in general that was the disease prostitutes (whether they called themselves courtesans or anything else) were more prone to than the more polite, but no less fatal tuberculosis.

I happily concede the main point of his letter (October 16), that there are imperial themes in both Pushkin's poem and Lermontov's *The Novice*. They are marginal connections, as he scrupulously admits; and I still believe that the principal coherence in his book *Talk about the*

*Last Poet* is its consistently high quality.

D. M. THOMAS,

10 Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford.

### George Perec

Sir, – I was delighted to read John Sturrock's enthusiastic review of the new OULIPO publication (October 16). Sturrock refers to George Perec's splendid novel, *La Disparition*, but he makes no mention of Perec's masterpiece to date, *La Vie mode d'emploi*, which came out in 1978. This book seems to me to be, if anything, finer than *Ulysses*, certainly in the same class. It won the Prix Femina in France, but my rather half-hearted attempts to interest English publishers in it have so far proved unsuccessful. This is hardly surprising since the book runs to over 650 pages, and would need at least a combination of Anthony Burgess and Ralph Manheim to translate, but it is a great pity that it is not better known over here, even by those who profess an interest in French literature.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI,

60 Prince Edward's Road, Lewes, Sussex.

### 'The Projection of Britain'

Sir, – In his review of Philip M. Taylor's book on British propaganda between the wars, *The Projection of Britain*, Stephen Koss criticizes the British government for "making scarcely any attempts to clarify much less defend, official policies in Northern Ireland".

One has to ask how Professor Koss has managed to overcome the Official Secrets Act as to be in possession of facts upon which to base this observation? From personal experience I can repeat what has been printed elsewhere that during 1969 to 1973, when I was head of a political radio news section in the Central Office of Information, I worked regularly to the brief of the British Information Services, New York, to provide just such material. Professor Koss states his never been produced. This involved regular transmission of brief, newsy items of "the man in the news, telling the news" in under sixty seconds, whether that man was the Prime Minister, Defence Secretary, Catholic priest or peace-worker. Often the material was also filmed but, because there were no satellite methods of dealing with television news film in the BIS New York offices, this material was often outdated by the time it arrived. I was also in a position to observe times when British government personnel visited American editorial offices to explain British policy in Ulster and the subsequent appearance, in the *New York Times* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, of carefully worded editorial appraisals of British policy in Ulster.

RICHARD USBORNE,

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The illustrations on the cover this week are by Will Bradley (left) and Gustav Klimt (right) and are taken from Siegfried Wichmann's *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art Since 1858* (432pp with 1,105 illustrations. Thames and Hudson, £30, 0 500 23341 1) which is published this week and which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

GRAHAM REYNOLDS is preparing a complete catalogue of the works of John Constable (1817-1837). EDWARD SEIDENSTICKER's books include his translation of *The Tale of Genji*, 1976, *Genji Days*, 1977, and *This Country: Japan*, 1979. KEVIN SHARPE is the author of *Sir Robert Cotton: History and Politics in Early Modern England*, 1980. PETER SINGER is the author of *Animal Liberation*, 1976. RICHARD STORRY is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. MICHAEL SULLIVAN is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford, and Professor of Oriental Art and Christensen Professor at Stanford University. CHRISTOPHER THORNE's books include *The United States, Britain and the War against Japan 1941-1945*, 1978. KEITH THURLEY is Professor of Industrial Relations at the London School of Economics. ANTHONY THWAITE's most recent collection of poems is *Victorian Voices*, 1980. CLAIRE TOMALIN is Literary Editor of *The Sunday Times*. Her books include *Shelley and His World*, 1980. BLAIR WORDEN is the author of *The Rump Parliament 1648-1653*, 1974.

### Among this week's contributors

G. C. ALLEN is Emeritus Professor of Political Economy at the University of London. His *The Japanese Economy*, 1981, is reviewed in this issue. LOUIS ALLEN's books include *Sitting, 1974*, and *The End of the War in Asia*, 1976.

HAROLD BEAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

QUINTIN BELL's books include *Ruskin*, 1963, and *Virginia Woolf: a Biography*, 1972.

GEOFFREY BEST is Professor of History at the University of Sussex. His books include *Humanity in Warfare*, 1980.

CARMEN BLACKER is a lecturer in Japanese at the University of Cambridge. Her books include *The Catapult Bow*, 1975.

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RONALD DORE's most recent book is *Shinohara: a Portrait of a Japanese Village*, 1979.

C. J. DUNN is Professor of Japanese at the School of Oriental and African Studies and President of the European Association for Japanese Studies.

D. J. ENRIGHT's recent collections of poems include *A Faust Book*, 1978.

JULIE HANKEY's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III* was published earlier this year.

JEREMY HARDIE is Vice-Chairman of the Monopolies Commission.

SAUEL HYNES's books include *The Auden Generation*, 1976.

FRANCIS KING's most recent book is a collection of short stories, *Indirect Method*, 1980.

JAMES KIRKUP teaches Comparative Literature at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

HERMIONE LEE's *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

JEAN-PIERRE LEHMANN is a lecturer in History at the University of Stirling.

FOSCO MARAINI's books include *L'isola delle pescatrici*, 1960, and *Japan: Patterns of Continuity*, 1971.

GEOFFREY MARSHALL's books include *Constitutional Theory*, 1971.

JAMES MELVILLE's most recent crime novel is *A Sort of Samurai*, 1981.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* was published earlier this year.

ANDREW MOTSON's new long poem, *Independence*, will be published next month.

SUNE OKADA, formerly a teacher at the Women's College in Tokyo, is a graduate student at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

BRIAN POWELL is a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He is completing a study of the modern Kabuki playwright, Mayama Seika.

MICHAEL PYE is Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds.

CHRISTOPHER REID's collection of poems, *Arcadia*, was published in 1979.

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# A nose for war

By Frank Tuohy

**TAKESHI KAIKO:**  
*Into a Black Sun*  
214pp. Tokyo: Kodansha. Yen 2300.  
0 87011 428 X

Early on in *Into a Black Sun* the journalist-narrator is telling an American army officer about Japanese writing. He explains the use of three different kinds of script: "The writer weaves the three like strands of rope to construct a sentence. Then, he says, there is the business of choosing between numerous personal pronouns: 'The choice of the 'I' form can determine the tone of the work. This is a difficult point, one that no other country's writers have to contend with."

It is true that in current English - apart from the royal "we", the affected "one" and perhaps the Hemingwayesque "you" - there is only one pronoun for the first person singular. But this does not solve the problem of the tone of the work. Writers of travel books provide a variety of examples: the "I" might be one of those self-admiring proconsuls on the old *Blackwood's Magazine*, who knew more about the natives than they knew themselves; or a quasi-avuncular scholar, like Norman Douglas; or, in our own day, an observer who is just and unobtrusive, like V. S. Naipaul. Novelists experience a similar difficulty: Anthony Trollope told an apprentice novelist that, if she used the first person, she would be accused of self-esteem. Modern novelists are apt to become awkward when describing their hero's sexual exploits.

They order these things differently in Japan, where there is a tradition of autobiographical fiction and the observer has no problems in observing himself. Whatever synonym for "I" Takeshi Kaiko chose, his translator has served him well. *Into a Black Sun* is no exact example of that special sensibility which Japanese readers find deficient in American and British novels, the hunger for the visible and palpable, the slightly myopic craving for detail that is either resonant or significant. A western reader will find no awkwardness in accompanying this witness to the brothels and eating-houses of Saigon in 1964, or the battlefields of the surrounding countryside.

*Into a Black Sun* was written in 1963, but appears only now in translation. It refers to a period in history which American readers, at least, will wish to forget. As a work of fiction it functions without narrative conflict, tensions or surprises of plotting, and yet the final effect is of a coherent work of art. At the same time it provides a picture of the relationship between Vietnamese and Americans which seems all the more authentic in that it comes from an Asian witness.

Takeshi Kaiko is aware of the similarities between the destruction of Japan in 1945 and what is going on in 1964. But there is no *Schadenfreude*. In fact his consciousness of the tragic absurdity of events becomes clear to him only when he reads Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court*: "We'd known the outcome all along, from a novel written seventy five years ago. The war... was all there." Nevertheless, he himself moves from being the ingenious spectator, "clinging to a precarious neutrality... allowing the curse of elitism, of pallid intellectualism, to follow even this far" until the final chapter when he goes out on a patrol that is almost annihilated by the Viet Cong.

In the conversation about writing between the journalist-narrator and the American army officer, the narrator says: "If I write about anything, it'll be about smells." The American asks: "Shouldn't literature be about one's mission in life rather than smells?" No, he is told, the interpretation of man's purpose changes with time. Smells don't.

## Mo-girl watching

By Francis King

**TAYAMA KATAI:**  
*The Quilt and Other Stories*  
Translated by Kenneth G. Henshall  
204pp. University of Tokyo Press.  
Yen 2800.  
0 86008 254 7

Just as in the Meiji Era the Japanese took over from the West countless inventions, institutions and customs, so less obtrusively, their intelligentsia tended to appropriate Western identities to replace ones that all these sudden and momentous innovations had either eroded or totally dissolved. Typical of this process was Tayama Katai (1871-1930), one of the pioneers of European Naturalism, a selection of whose short-stories has now appeared in an English translation by Kenneth G. Henshall.

In his account in his memoirs of the genesis of the longest work here included, "The Quilt", Katai wrote: Just at that time I was deeply moved, mind and body, by Gerhart Hauptmann's *Einsame Menschen*. I felt that Vockerat's loneliness was my own... Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Nietzsche - in the ideology of such writers I felt that the *fin-de-siècle* distress appeared clearly. I felt I too would like to suffer this in my turn.

In the Hauptmann story, the intellectual Vockerat, bored and irritated by his dim and conventional wife, falls in love with the girl student who comes to lodge with them. As though in a deliberate effort to

Certainly smells, good, bad and disgusting, play a large part in this narrative. But so also do innumerable other touches of description, the laundered shirts hanging on the gun barrels of Vietnamese tanks, "the ticked-tin taste of air-conditioning", the rooms that are "candle-lit" in the dark walls, the lines of bicycles that go on coming into town, loaded with mounds of flowers, when the war is only a few miles away.

Most telling, perhaps, of all Takeshi Kaiko's descriptions are those that deal with the encounters between the Vietnamese and their allies. He remembers how the Japanese had reacted first to "those same blue eyes and flaming cheeks". He observes the young soldiers clustering around to watch an American shaving or look at the hair on his chest, or "yelp with embarrassment when Qis hung around bare-assed after a shower". In Saigon he sees Vietnamese girls "flirting like kittens, but though their mouths laughed and their white teeth flashed, their eyes were cold". At one significant moment, a Viet-

namese soldier is cleaning a machine gun, when an American adviser comes over to help him.

His arms went limp and his chin dropped as though he'd fallen into an air-pocket that left him blind and deaf. Haines continued to talk, but the Vietnamese put down his screwdriver and walked away... There are insects and animals that suddenly turn over and corner death when chased into a corner by a stronger enemy.

In the dark chaos of Saigon, he manages to keep the picture in focus. A group of writers meets to listen to an open letter to André Malraux, a parody of muddle and illogic; later, other letters are to be addressed to Refie Char, Henry Miller, Martin Luther King. While a Japanese colleague experiences the dubious pleasure of a "licking house", the narrator forms a relationship with a girl refugee from North Vietnam. Her brother, who works as an interpreter, is conscripted, despite chopping off some of his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. The letters reveal much about his mind and thoughts and his character, which always seemed to his Japanese friend peculiarly and delightfully English.

Having accompanied Blunden back to England when he returned from his first professional post in 1927, Miss Hayashi settled in London with his encouragement and support. He helped her with money, and she was also able to earn her own living by doing research for him and other writers, including Graham Greene and George Orwell. Her work at the British Museum was of substantial help to Blunden in his researches on Clare, Keats and Shelley, and he generously acknowledges this in his letters. She was also able to assist him unobtrusively when he joined the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Before her death in 1962, Miss Hayashi had become a British citizen. She never went back to Japan.

A small, plain, serious girl, Aki Hayashi first met Blunden in 1924 at the Summer College in Karuizawa. Blunden had been invited to Tokyo Imperial University (Teidai) as Professor of English from 1924-1927. Unaccompanied by his first wife and two children, he stayed at a modest inn near the university, and for the first year of his stay he was very lonely and suffered much from asthma. At that time Tokyo was recovering from a great earthquake, and life was in a state of paralysis. The teachers and students at the English Faculty looked forward to a teacher who could satisfy their curiosity about the West, and Edmund Blunden seemed to them a god-sent messenger from what they saw as that liberated, culturally-advanced country, England.

He soon found himself very popular among the students: perhaps too popular, because most of his spare time was spent receiving dozens of visitors - students and devotees all of whom wanted to know about England and her literature. Unlike his predecessor, Blunden was a kind, attentive and conscientious teacher and his students appreciated his readiness to talk to them.

Hayashi was not one of Blunden's students at Teidai. She had graduated from Tsuda College as one of the most promising pupils of its principal, Umeko Tsuda, a well-known pioneer of women's higher education. When Blunden first met Hayashi, he was twenty-eight years old. She was thirty-five and an English teacher at one of the women's high schools near Nagoya. According to her pupils' recollections, she was a typical Tsuda schoolmistress, a brisk-mannered bluestocking, not particularly attractive either in character or in appearance. But Hayashi was more than kind to Blunden, who, despite his enormous popularity among the students, was not happy in Japan. He often found his new life and role dull, and his frustration and difficulties were much mitigated by a growing love for Hayashi, who acted not only as a substitute for a wife and mother but also as an efficient secretary and literary companion. More than anything though, perhaps, he responded simply to her own love for him, writing (on September 24, 1925):

Your noble, generous, most womanly thought of "self-sacrifice" is in itself a great thing done for me. I want you, and I shall try not to give you any opportunity for that self-sacrifice: you always will be putting me to shame with your active love.

The Japanese students were by no means tolerant of their respected teacher's relationship with Hayashi, venting their resentment in complaints about her dark-skinned features and ungracious personality. One of Blunden's pupils at the time, now an emeritus professor of English at Tokyo University, remembers that he used to mistake her for a housemaid. If Hayashi had been more conventionally attractive to the students, they would, he feels, have accepted her gladly, but she was far from conforming to the traditional Japanese ideal of a lady - pretty, modest and good-mannered. The students' rejection of Hayashi may well have prompted her decision to leave Japan for good.

The romance was well established by October 1924, as it is shown by the first letter from Blunden to "Dearest Autumn" (Aki means "autumn" in Japanese). He writes that he will meet her off the train at Tokyo, after a long night journey which he is worried will tire her:

I am all here for the thrill of it... No-body sympathizes with us because if they did they couldn't bear this country for another day.

*Into a Black Sun* presents a vivid and intimate picture, but it may finally be a tendentious one. Living in Tokyo in the 1960s, I remember the reaction to early photographs from the war in Indo-China: shock, not at the horrors depicted, but at their publication. Ordinary people should not be shown such things. At the same time - the 1964 Olympics had an influence here - there was a somewhat self-conscious effort towards humanitarianism, at showing the Japanese people as members of the brotherhood of man. *Into a Black Sun* demonstrates this, while continuing to insist that all Westerners - Graham Greene is dragged in for a mention - had to be wrong about Vietnam. Possibly, but it was not necessary to be a Westerner to be wrong about what was going on. The following year I watched a Japanese business man carrying a bag of golf clubs into the People's Republic of China.

In the dark chaos of Saigon, he manages to keep the picture in focus. A group of writers meets to listen to an open letter to André Malraux, a parody of muddle and illogic; later, other letters are to be addressed to Refie Char, Henry Miller, Martin Luther King. While a Japanese colleague experiences the dubious pleasure of a "licking house", the narrator forms a relationship with a girl refugee from North Vietnam. Her brother, who works as an interpreter, is conscripted, despite chopping off some of his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. The letters reveal much about his mind and thoughts and his character, which always seemed to his Japanese friend peculiarly and delightfully English.

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## Edmund Blunden and his 'Dearest Autumn'

By Sumie Okada

For the history of Anglo-Japanese literary relations there has lately been a kind of some interest. This is a large number of letters - more than a thousand - written by Edmund Blunden to Aki Hayashi, a Japanese woman teacher whom he met when he was himself teaching in Tokyo. The correspondence covers a span of more than thirty years, and reveals much about Blunden's hopes and activities as a poet and teacher, about his own literary projects, and his impressions of Japan and Japanese. It is at times touchingly intimate. Blunden sent poems to Miss Hayashi, often written in Japanese vein, and was closest to her at the time he was meditating and beginning to write his classic account of his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. The letters reveal much about his mind and thoughts and his character, which always seemed to his Japanese friend peculiarly and delightfully English.

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Hayashi was not one of Blunden's students at Teidai. She had graduated from Tsuda College as one of the most promising pupils of its principal, Umeko Tsuda, a well-known pioneer of women's higher education. When Blunden first met Hayashi, he was twenty-eight years old. She was thirty-five and an English teacher at one of the women's high schools near Nagoya. According to her pupils' recollections, she was a typical Tsuda schoolmistress, a brisk-mannered bluestocking, not particularly attractive either in character or in appearance. But Hayashi was more than kind to Blunden, who, despite his enormous popularity among the students, was not happy in Japan. He often found his new life and role dull, and his frustration and difficulties were much mitigated by a growing love for Hayashi, who acted not only as a substitute for a wife and mother but also as an efficient secretary and literary companion. More than anything though, perhaps, he responded simply to her own love for him, writing (on September 24, 1925):

Your noble, generous, most womanly thought of "self-sacrifice" is in itself a great thing done for me. I want you, and I shall try not to give you any opportunity for that self-sacrifice: you always will be putting me to shame with your active love.

The Japanese students were by no means tolerant of their respected teacher's relationship with Hayashi, venting their resentment in complaints about her dark-skinned features and ungracious personality. One of Blunden's pupils at the time, now an emeritus professor of English at Tokyo University, remembers that he used to mistake her for a housemaid. If Hayashi had been more conventionally attractive to the students, they would, he feels, have accepted her gladly, but she was far from conforming to the traditional Japanese ideal of a lady - pretty, modest and good-mannered. The students' rejection of Hayashi may well have prompted her decision to leave Japan for good.

The romance was well established by October 1924, as it is shown by the first letter from Blunden to "Dearest Autumn" (Aki means "autumn" in Japanese). He writes that he will meet her off the train at Tokyo, after a long night journey which he is worried will tire her:

I am all here for the thrill of it... No-body sympathizes with us because if they did they couldn't bear this country for another day.

*Into a Black Sun* presents a vivid and intimate picture, but it may finally be a tendentious one. Living in Tokyo in the 1960s, I remember the reaction to early photographs from the war in Indo-China: shock, not at the horrors depicted, but at their publication. Ordinary people should not be shown such things. At the same time - the 1964 Olympics had an influence here - there was a somewhat self-conscious effort towards humanitarianism, at showing the Japanese people as members of the brotherhood of man. *Into a Black Sun* demonstrates this, while continuing to insist that all Westerners - Graham Greene is dragged in for a mention - had to be wrong about Vietnam. Possibly, but it was not necessary to be a Westerner to be wrong about what was going on. The following year I watched a Japanese business man carrying a bag of golf clubs into the People's Republic of China.

In the dark chaos of Saigon, he manages to keep the picture in focus. A group of writers meets to listen to an open letter to André Malraux, a parody of muddle and illogic; later, other letters are to be addressed to Refie Char, Henry Miller, Martin Luther King. While a Japanese colleague experiences the dubious pleasure of a "licking house", the narrator forms a relationship with a girl refugee from North Vietnam. Her brother, who works as an interpreter, is conscripted, despite chopping off some of his experiences in the First World War, *Undertones of War*. The letters reveal much about his mind and thoughts and his character, which always seemed to his Japanese friend peculiarly and delightfully English.

Having accompanied Blunden back to England when he returned from his first professional post in 1927, Miss Hayashi settled in London with his encouragement and support. He helped her with money, and she was also able to earn her own living by doing research for him and other writers, including Graham Greene and George Orwell. Her work at the British Museum was of substantial help to Blunden in his researches on Clare, Keats and Shelley, and he generously acknowledges this in his letters. She was also able to assist him unobtrusively when he joined the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Before her death in 1962, Miss Hayashi had become a British citizen. She never went back to Japan.

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Aki Hayashi and Edmund Blunden, c. 1925.

ful a love has awakened between you and I! I shall rely on it and live on it in many solitary hours. It is a charm to keep me going. I am most distressed that I cannot fulfil all that I ought to Autumn, as things stand now, but you have unselfish patience and a splendid courage. When I was with you the cares of this hurried and bilious world ceased to touch me. I loved whatever gave me the chance to do some slight thing for you; and, as it has been, so it will continue to be.

And it is clear, too, that Aki put him under some pressure to make less equivocal avowals to her:

Aki asks me to write, - That I would sooner live with her, than with anyone.

If I was not already married, he wrote, and again:

Why question so often? Why rob me of my peace? Have I not shown you my spirit, Made you the receiver of my intimate ideas,

And he wrote, and again: But still how gentle and beautiful a love has awakened between you and I! I shall rely on it and live on it in many solitary hours. It is a charm to keep me going. I am most distressed that I cannot fulfil all that I ought to Autumn, as things stand now, but you have unselfish patience and a splendid courage. When I was with you the cares of this hurried and bilious world ceased to touch me. I loved whatever gave me the chance to do some slight thing for you; and, as it has been, so it will continue to be.

Entrusted to you the desires of my heart?

In January 1927 he writes, as it were, a promise, and signs it: "In case I should ever marry a second time I should in all likelihood marry Aki, Edmund Blunden."

He was serious in his suggestion that Aki should come to England with him, about which he sent her a somewhat ambiguous *haiku*:

Aki, Awaiting the happy day When she explores London for herself. She should come, but in what capacity?

I have been thinking that I shall take you into our home as my copyist or secretary and I believe that it can be done without difficulty. I couldn't afford an English secretary, I need one; and that I think will be the reason why Aki-Chan comes. But there is time yet to discuss all side-issues. In the meantime their idyl continued.

I enjoy the yellow flames of leaves

I have been thinking that I shall take you into our home as my copyist or secretary and I believe that it can be done without difficulty. I couldn't afford an English secretary, I need one; and that I think will be the reason why Aki-Chan comes. But there is time yet to discuss all side-issues. In the meantime their idyl continued.

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which leap now from the chestnut trees - at Toranamom they line the road. I also enjoy the small children of this town, who hail my strange apparition with "Thee-jin", and stop playing as though a giant were passing.

Shelley's biographer also believed, perhaps naively, in love's innocence. "If there is any innocence, it is love; and I cannot help loving you, though far off is one whom I love." While in Japan, at least, he seems to have occasionally entertained the idea that Aki should join the household of his wife, children and mother. "Soon I shall be writing my mother about a young Japanese lady who wants to see the land of her dreams and would be a great delight to have as a guest". He had qualms, resolved in various ways.

I wonder though whether you would not find a small town in the West of England rather monotonous. But as a first resting-place in England it might do well, and you would find them all so natural and familiar that it would be the best way of beginning. Afterwards your experience of London and other places would be easily arranged - or more easily.

For her part, Aki seems to have had a romantic view of England as a utopia where neither burglars nor robbers lived, a view that Blunden did his best to correct: "We have some burglars and knaves in England too, Aki - you're an optimist. But they don't use knives quite so commonly." But he understood Aki's feelings towards what was later to be her adopted country. In *The Mind's Eye* (1934) he wrote that the Japanese "passion for our literature resembles our own passion for Greek and Roman glories. England has become a new Athens to many Japanese."

On August 25, 1927 the pair landed at Plymouth and soon afterwards the idyll ended. Any ideas of a common ménage had to be given up. Blunden discovered that he still loved his wife and did not attempt to bring her and Aki together.

I am *most anxious* that you should be happy and yet it is yourself alone who can make you so, for my home is intensely dear to me and I cannot help giving my life to it, with the hope that everything there will become as nearly perfect as a man can find... but I can feel that loneliness and impatience you feel; they weigh on me among my other problems; I have you in my heart and feel that you are the only real gain I found in Japan. The chance of my renewing all that was beautiful in the love between me and my wife must dominate all my actions at present, and your devotion will not fail me in this, my overwhelming hope and great task... If my feelings towards my wife had really died, should not have to demand of you the sacrifice of being alone in London; but instead I find that I am inspired by her excellent qualities and her own love surviving all the dreary discords of the past years, to love her as gently as ever.

In 1930, after he had at last obtained a divorce, Aki may still have had hopes, but the final blow came when, two years later, Blunden married Sylvia Norman. Aki seems never to have complained or reproached him, and though his letters refer once or twice to his "making things more difficult", he always felt that he would count on her continued loyalty and support. "If you fail me now, I shall have one more black page in my life's story. She did not fail him, and in return he was

true to his pledge of looking after her financially.

I don't know how our money matters stand but am enclosing a cheque for £7 which I think will answer your needs; I suppose you will keep account of all for I don't have time...

I was much hurt at lunch yesterday by seeing that you were very hungry: I beg you not to let yourself be so, but withdraw what you want from Bishopsgate and next month I will make it up and supply the rest - this month I cannot receive much.

When she was ill he helped her with continued kindness. And he greatly valued her assistance in his later work, "heartily congratulating" her on her transcript of John Clare's MS, which was "extraordinarily difficult", and on her discovery of a letter from Clare to Woodhouse.

During the war Aki underwent the disagreeable experience of being an "enemy alien", but Blunden continued to employ and protect her. In 1947 he was appointed to a cultural mission to Japan, arriving in Yokohama in December 1947 with his third wife and their eldest daughter. (In the course of his three-year stay he was to give nearly 600 lectures.) Aki remained in London. Her pride made her keep her address secret from Japanese visitors, but she was intensely proud of her connection with the British Museum and had it posted on the alumni roll of the college where she had worked before resigning to accompany Blunden to England. When the news of her death reached him in Hong Kong he was shocked and saddened. In her will she left him her savings and all her other property.



This sketch of the haiku poet, Iwano, a pupil of Bashō, is included in an exhibition of "Japanese Popular Literature of the Edo Period 1600-1868" at the British Library which opened this week and will run until June 1982.

## Landscapes of inner space

By Carmen Blacker

HAROLD STEWART:

By the Old Walls of Kyoto  
463pp. New York and Tokyo:  
Weatherhill, \$22.50.

Harold Stewart is already known in this country as a poet, and as the translator of two volumes of *haiku* verse. His writings on Buddhism and on the philosophy *perennis* are less familiar outside Japan. For those who have had the privilege of meeting him and hearing his conversation, however, in the "ten-foot-square hermitage" in Kyoto which has been his home for the last fifteen years, this new book will be recognized as the proper distillation of the experience, in both the inner and the outer mode, of a remarkable personality.

By the Old Walls of Kyoto is primarily an account of a journey; but of a journey accomplished, as every pilgrim must be, on two levels. In the twelve poems which form the heart of the work Stewart conducts us on a *meiji* or circumambulation of twelve landscapes in the ancient and geomantic city of Kyoto. Under his guidance we are shown, in vivid detail, a succession of celebrated Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, gardens, tombs and peripheral hills. The journey, round these landscapes takes place, moreover, within a defined circle of time. We start amidst the green of late spring, continue through high summer, autumn and winter, to end, once more in spring, at the point where we started.

But the journey represents at the same time an interior spiritual search, in which the poet guides us with the correspondence between inner and outer, which is one of the persistent themes of the book; on a progression through the stages of the soul undergone by the Buddhist pilgrim.

Each of the twelve poems is accompanied by a prose commentary, or essay, in which the various subjects touched upon in the poems are discussed and elucidated. This complementary structure of poem and prose, though unfamiliar in the West, in fact draws on Buddhist tradition, and Stewart in adopting it

is following the precedent of the Buddhist scholar who writes an "extended self-commentary in prose on his own more concentrated text in verse". Conversely, for those less concerned with poetry, the poems may be read as a verse epitome of the subjects expounded in the prose texts.

The twelve places in and around Kyoto which Stewart has chosen for the stages in his contemplative journey are all in some degree holy spots, sanctified either by natural beauty, by the subtle man-made hidden beauty known as *yugen*, or by the presence of a saint. Thus we begin among the exquisite green hills of Arashiyama, which is an enactment on the river of an ancient festival of music and boats. We then proceed through the celebrated Zen garden of Ryōanji, constructed of rocks and white sand; pause in the heat of summer before the statue of Maitreya in the Kōryōji temple; continue, into autumn, at the Jakkōin nunnery at Ohara, and thence into the beautiful Tendai temple of Sanzenin. Thereafter, on our last stage, we are taken on a piercingly cold winter dawn into the Ginkakuji temple and garden, to return once more, as spring itself recurs, through the tombs of the Kurodani cemetery.

On an exterior level therefore, the book will serve as a "contemplative guide" to the incomparably rich artistic heritage of the ancient capital as it is found exemplified in these twelve places. "The poems are factually accurate," Mr Stewart explains, "down to the last topographical detail, as long and intimate observation on the spot could make them." Any obscurities, any needful background, any multiple layers of meaning, are elucidated in the prose commentaries, which will come, I predict, to serve as a little encyclopedia of Japanese culture. Among the astonishingly wide range of subjects treated, and treated with equal remarkable insight, are Japanese music and poetry, literature and history, sculpture, painting, architecture, gardens, pottery, flowers and tea.

Nor is this all. The journey has its analogical counterpart in the soul, as a passage through corresponding states of consciousness or inner space. Hence, as occasion arises in the poems, the prose essays "explore

in depth certain aspects of Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics and iconography, myth and ritual and touch upon the festivals and legends of Shinto". Indeed, it is Stewart's wisdom in the metaphysical *perennis*, his easy lucidity in matters of the traditional spiritual quest and its archetypal symbols, and in particular his utter integrity and confident faith as a professed and practising member of the Shin sect of Buddhism, which lift this book into a category by itself and will cause the reader who "sees with" him to return to it again and again throughout his life.

Certain broad conceptual themes can be distinguished throughout the work. We soon discern, for example, the tension between the ancient city of Kyoto, still encapsulating traditional metaphysical values, and its modern, corrupt counterpart, the new Kyoto, a city of the "last stage" of its great cycle, for the "necropolis" which assigns reality only to that which is measurable and quantifiable.

A complex web of symbols may furthermore be discovered recurring through the poems: the wall, for example, which, as the title of the book suggests, both encloses and excludes; the White Path between two rivers, that familiar motif in Amidist art; the figure of the dragon, both in its descending form, *kudariyō*, and its ascending one, *noboriyō*, and which fused together express the *axis mundi*. Likewise, the vocabulary of alchemy, expressing the transformation from base to pure, and assimilated to the spiritual quest, recurs again and again.

Overshadowing the whole work, however, can be discerned the polarities, and the poet's gradual progress from the one to the other. From the Zen view, which holds that enlightenment is impossible without self-effort of a particular kind, he moves towards the Shin view, which represents the Other Power teaching of the Pure Land schools, and which teaches that in the present declining age man is unable to free himself by any efforts of his own from the great delusion, and must throw himself entirely on the mercy of Amida Buddha. He writes with a particular simplicity and intensity which enables us to "see" through his eyes:

In poem 2, for example, Stewart finds himself meditating in the celebrated Zen stone garden of Ryōanji. The deep tranquility of wooded hills That rise behind the temple has been brought

Into this walled enclosure, which insinuates Monastic quietude, an atmosphere Filled with mysterious emptiness, for here The open secrecy of Zen is taught By fifteen stones within a sand-dotted court: A dry *kōan* which haunts and teases thought

With bare insistence that it cannot seize Like these cicadas shaking, faintly sure Their silver stridings in the cedar trees.

As the poem advances through the first ten landscapes, however, he becomes increasingly aware of the supreme Buddhist paradox: how can we purify ourselves spiritually by efforts made from an illusory ego? How can efforts made from within a black prison affect the bright scene outside? Only when the mysterious Awakening of the Faith, or *hotoke-dōshin*, occurs, which once experienced is recognized to be beyond ego, and to be as a transference from the responding Buddha nature in ourselves. That here is "the only miracle recognised by the Buddha" Stewart comes to realize in his tenth and longest poem, when he arrives on an autumn evening at the Tendai temple of Sanzenin. As he makes his way through the halls and past the murals of the temple, he experiences a vision of the Amida Triad, and of the Pure Land itself through a series of contemplations which recall those described in the *Amityurdayana Sutra*.

Only by grace such as this can we hope to achieve liberation at this particular time. For Stewart believes, in accordance with the metaphysical *perennis* expressed by such writers as René Guénon, A. K. Coomaraswamy, Marco Palla and Kathleen Raine, that we have reached that last stage of the cycle, in which the only kind of reality recognized is that of the material, quantifiable world. Again, and again he reminds us that the physical world is not the only reality, and, further, that this very physical world, cut off from its corresponding higher levels, becomes dead and meaningless. Our modern malady, with its loss of a spiritual centre of purpose and meaning,

recurs throughout the narrative. "The lower levels of reality can form adequate symbols of the higher", but only deny the higher and the familiar solid world is robbed of significance.

In the last poem, when the journey has been accomplished full circle, we hear the theme of the Bodhisattva, who renounces his liberation from the wheel in order to turn to help those still bound to it. The figure in the last of the Ten Ordering Pictures returns to the marketplace with hands bestowing bliss. Stewart wonders, will his words be heard in this final age, when the truth of the dharma is obscured, and when our own minor cycle is renewed only against the background of the decline of the larger movement? He sees the new Kyoto, and the temple pond polluted with refuse. But at the last there blows over its surface a shower of white petals.

Only scant justice can be done in a short review to this large and remarkable book. To mention only a smattering of the subjects discussed in the course of the commentaries we may cite: the landscape of the Pure Land; its trees and jewels; the ranks of dragons; the number of colours visible in the rainbow of seven colours; the nature of the Buddhist icon which reflects the hidden aspect of him who looks at it; Zen *kōans* and the disposition of stones in Zen gardens.

By the Walls of Old Kyoto is further embellished by a perimont binding, endpapers representing tiles in the Daitokuji temple, and by 24 enchanting landscapes by four notable Japanese artists of the nineteenth century, chosen from the *Tōfūgachō*, an album of pictures of the old capital.

In his translation of *The Zen Poems of Ryōkan* (219pp. Princeton Library of Asian Translations: Princeton University Press, £13.40), Nobuyuki Yuasa illustrates, and in his introduction evaluates, the variety of subjects present in the poetry of an eccentric poet-priest of the late Edo period. Ryōkan lived as a recluse for most of his life during which he wrote some fourteen hundred *waka* (Japanese poems), and a small number of *haiku*.

THOMAS M. HUBER:

The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan  
260pp. Stanford University Press.  
\$19.50.  
0 8047 1048 1

ROGER W. BOWEN:

Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan  
A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement  
367pp. University of California Press.  
\$28.  
0 520 03665 4

The origins of the political revolution of 1868 and Japan's subsequent transformation to modernity, according to Thomas Huber, can be found in the thoughts and deeds of low-income, well-educated, meritocratic and bureaucratized *samurai* of the Chōshū han. Focusing his attention on Yoshida Shōin, Kusaka Genzoku and Takasugi Shinsaku, he seeks not only to establish the social background, intellectual achievements and political commitment of these revolutionaries but also to show that they, and especially Yoshida, provided a blueprint for the reforms which followed their untimely deaths - they were all killed before the Meiji Restoration - and that both their motivations and their ambitions were primarily endogenous rather than responses to Western stimulation. He strongly supports the view that class struggle was a significant factor in the political events which culminated in the overthrow of the Tokugawa régime and rejects the interpretation of the Meiji Restoration as a "revolution from above". Instead he argues that it

was a social rebellion carried out by Japan's disciplined and highly educated service intelligentsia, against aristocratic oppression and outmoded social forms. The Restorationists were motivated to act politically, first, because of material deprivation suffered by their class, and second, because of their idealistic commitment to the welfare of the whole political community. Both of these motivating interests were deeply rooted in their social conditions as members of the Tokugawa service intelligentsia.

Despite claims to the contrary, there is, in fact, little originality in the major propositions of this book. This may explain why, in spite of its being reasonably brief, there is a great deal of repetition. And, in

view of the author's frequent reference to the staunch idealism of the Chōshū intelligentsia, one wonders how well acquainted he is with Japanese history after 1868. Not only do Ito Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo figure in his category of idealists, but even Shinagawa Yajirō; while Ito and Yamagata were undoubtedly able statesmen, they were essentially opportunistic politicians, hardly characterized by "idealistic commitment to the welfare of the whole political community", while Shinagawa was mainly remembered for his brutal repression of political rights and strong-arm police tactics, resulting in numerous deaths, in Japan's early parliamentary elections. Huber's enthusiasm for his heroes, however, remains undiminished. Through their sacrifices and efforts

sweeping changes altered the essential quality of public life. They brought a vitality and rationality that enlivened all spheres of public action. There soon followed unprecedented growth in crop yields, commerce, and industry. There arose a vigorous press and a healthy general clamor for democracy. Philosophy, literature, and the arts, nourished by foreign as well as native inspiration, flourished as never before. Famine was unknown, and modern medical knowledge spread across the land. In the end the reforms would rescue tens of millions of ordinary Japanese from ignorance, disease, and want.

This utopian view of Meiji Japan is a very, very far cry from the society which Roger Bowen in *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan* so vividly describes and analyses. In fact, we have here something completely different, namely one of the most stimulating, indeed challenging studies of modern Japanese social history to have emerged in recent years. We also have a truly revisionist work in which hardly one orthodox interpretation or its upholders is spared. Bowen has challenged the established, and though not all of his conclusions will be readily accepted - and indeed he is likely to unleash a very exciting debate - it would be churlish on the part of any of his critics not to congratulate him.

Bowen skillfully uses the social scientist's tools, but not his jargon; the book is, in fact, very well written. It displays an impressive command of his subject not just from the particular Japanese viewpoint, but in its universal perspective. Bowen therefore avoids the pitfall of proclivity

## Related roles

By Michael Pye

T. P. KASULIS:

Zen Action Zen Person  
177pp. Hawaii University Press.  
\$12.95.

What can emptiness and no-mind have to do with the Western concept of personhood? T. P. Kasulis ploughs a courageous furrow. Having both the necessary skills and a sense of purpose, he performs a remarkable feat of meditation. Parts of *Zen Action*, Zen Person encompass well-known themes: Nagarjuna's logic of emptiness, the Chinese concepts of *tao* and non-being, the weaving together of these in Zen tradition, and the consequent move from logic to spontaneity and intuitive perception. With thirteenth-century Sōtō Zen master Dōgen and the very different Rinzai master Hakuin (1685-1768), Kasulis takes us into the heart of the Japanese Zen experience. Somehow he manages to communicate in book form "the subtle difference between 'not-thinking', which is nihilistic, and 'without-thinking', which is an acceptance of everyday mental occurrences without being ensnared

by them. For the thoughtful Westerner this must be one of the most clear and perceptive accounts of Zen available.

Thoroughly new is Kasulis's attempt to locate the Zen understanding of the person in secular Japanese assumptions. The meaning of personal existence in Japanese terms is entirely bound up with the network of relationships which defines responsibility and security. An individual in abstraction from these is of little worth. A person consists of his roles in relationship. Zen practice too leads right away from abstractions and principles but sees authentic being in uncluttered, spontaneous response to things as they are, or as they come. Thus Zen can easily be related to many other activities such as art or swordsmanship. At the same time Zen drives back down to the base of personhood, namely non-being, and teaches non-attachment to secular duties and calculations, even while these are being performed. This has a strength-releasing effect. Though Kasulis does not say so, it is therefore good for trade. Thus both Masters and managers are content.

If Zen Buddhism in its Japanese form fits so well with Japanese social assumptions, how can it be related to the Western mind (if there is such a

thing) or to Western needs? Does the concept of personhood as a created and/or creative centre of energy with its own persistent identity not run counter to such an emptying-out in pure relationship? Kasulis admits that a straight transmission to the West is not possible, but maintains that the power of the Zen perception may be drawn upon through an internalization of Zen practice. This will lead to a relinquishment of the idea that theories and systems can explain and control everything, or that truth can be progressively accumulated and used, with ourselves as the centre of some fixed set of arrangements. The genuine person will then be one "who intrinsically has no standpoint" (from the old Indian Mahayana Buddhism) yet who is ready to adopt specific perspectives for the practical articulation of science and art. The ideal is then "to be essentially no person, while simultaneously being the personal act appropriate to the occasion", whereupon Kasulis lapses, with Bashō, into poetry.

What he does not explain is why Japanese society, if so in tune with Zen, is itself so effectively imprisoned in premeditated inter-personal and economic calculations. Surely there is more to Zen than social robotics.

Bowen justifies his conclusions and radical differences from past interpretations with the claim that the main weakness of the "failure thesis" lies in its neglect of the practice of politics at different levels of society. The level at which most specialists on Japan have aimed their historical analyses is the elite and national level of politics, the level occupied by national party leaders, the chiefs of big business, and high ranking government officials.

Consequently, "past treatments of the political history of this period have generally not been very sensitive to commoner and the organization and ideology behind their rebellions". In contrast to previous historiographical emphasis on perceiving history "from above", the author provides a rich, detailed and penetrating analysis of history "from below".

Bowen insists that the rebellious commoners were by no means motivated by chauvinism, traditionalism or millenarianism, but that they were progressive in outlook. He examines the central and crucial role of Ueki Emori - one of the most sophisticated political theorists of Meiji Japan - in translating complicated concepts for the masses. Among the methods Ueki used was that of composing popular songs, for example the "Country Song of Popular Rights"; in this way the commoners were treated to lessons in Western political history and philosophy. Thus, democracy may have been re-

jected by the elites, but not only did an acquaintance with and understanding of its fundamental precepts filter down to the lower layers of society, but indeed they were eagerly espoused.

Bowen's case resides essentially in a rejection of cultural determinism. The doctrine of natural rights helped the rebels to "express in universal terms the way things *ought* to be, and to condemn in absolute terms the way things *were*". This radical break with past orthodoxy - according to which man enjoyed no rights but was bound with obligations - arose "because conditions had changed sufficiently to make obsolete the old political idiom derived from subsistence and Confucian ethics". The political violence in which the commoners engaged reflected "the growth of liberal or bourgeois economic and political forces in Japan during the 1880s", which led to a "rising political consciousness that could only be manifested in capitalistic society, that is, a consciousness of the idea that political obligation to the State rested upon the State's recognition that property and freedom are the basic indivisible and inalienable rights of all men". If

this form of political rebellion was more prevalent in the countryside than in the cities, that was because "Japanese capitalist growth was 'rural centred'". This will undoubtedly constitute the most controversial aspect of Bowen's thesis for it requires a fairly unqualified acceptance of the view that the base determines the superstructure.

In 1945 American forces finally liberated Japan and unleashed, during the occupation, the spontaneous and deep-rooted democratic tendencies of the Japanese people. In the years of reconstruction, the American model was there to be emulated, but this avid desire to gain freedom as it was experienced and understood in the West had for long been a cry of the oppressed Japanese masses, as indeed is illustrated in "Jiyū no uta" ("Song of Liberty"), one of the popular songs of the 1880s:

Follow the path of the English Revolution:  
Yesterday a King, today a rebel.  
Crownwell's beckoning with a flag of Liberty in his hand  
Almost upset Heaven.  
By pulling King Charles to death  
The basis of liberty was laid.

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## Working the miracle

By Jeremy Hardie

G. C. ALLEN:  
The Japanese Economy  
262pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£4.50.  
0 297 779504

Dazzled as we all now are by Japanese industrial success, it is easy to forget how very similar their economy is to the British. Take the familiar litany of defects popularized in a hundred accounts of the failure of the British economy. We have a rigid society, where individual success depends on the right education and the right connections. Profit is a dirty word, and wage levels are fixed according to whether they are seen to be fair and maintain adequate living standards, rather than on the contribution made by each employee to output. The government constantly interferes with business, and businessmen spend as much time worrying about the bureaucrats and politicians as they do on running their own affairs. No matter what government is in power, corporatism is dominant; extra-parliamentary forces such as the civil service and the bankers regulate the activities of the private sector. The classical model of free enterprise is irrelevant; the economy is not only mixed, but hopelessly confused between private profit, planning, state intervention and the market.

This picture of British society and its economy, for all its simplifications, is remarkable in that, *mutatis mutandis*, it applies just as well to the Japanese. In Japan, it matters a great deal to have attended Tokyo University, or some similar institution, and there become part of an able and influential group. Just as if you have been at Eton, the freemasonry will help you throughout your career, whether you go into business, a bank or the civil service. The

metaphor of Japan incorporated, although stale and ill-understood, captures important features of Japanese business and political life. Collision and joint planning are part of the essential fabric of Japanese industry. It makes no real sense to talk of Japan being a free-market economy on the pattern of the American ideal.

Why do these oddities shackle the British, but turn to gold in the hands of the Japanese? One pessimistic view, quoted by G. C. Allen in his excellent book, is that their successes "... seem to rest on social and political values at least as much as on economic variables." That is, the Japanese have a long history of deference, loyalty and group activity which is ideally suited to operating large industries. The Anglo-American tradition is individualistic and competitive; qualities which may have been ideal for running small enterprises in the nineteenth century, but are often fatal to the cooperation needed for large-scale, technically complex production. If this analysis is right, there is not much that the West can do - we cannot, after all, re-create instinctive Japanese values in Detroit or Longbridge.

However, as appears from Allen's account, social and political harmony have not always existed in Japan. The Meiji restoration itself was the climax of a huge shift in class and political attitudes; the 1930s were racked by tension; and even after the war cohesion was not established until 1950, when the Japanese were allowed by the Americans to readopt many of their pre-war habits and institutions. The fact that these virtues now exist and operate so effectively is thus partly a matter of luck, in the sense of being inexplicably linked with other features of Japan and the post-war world.

A more optimistic view, which seems nearer Allen's own position, is

that Japan has done nothing more magical than to succeed with industrial policies which seem quite unoriginal to Westerners, but need considerable skill if they are to be operated well. The Japanese have been as generous with protection and subsidies to favoured sectors of the economy as any Bannite could wish; they take the infant-industry argument seriously. A new industry in a technically advanced sector can expect to be defended against foreign competition until it is strong enough to stand on its own feet. The interesting question, therefore, is not whether market forces should be the determining factor, but why it is that the Japanese breed swans, while we nurse lame ducks. A similar case applies to indicative planning, the nearest Western analogue to the links between business, finance and the bureaucracy by which Japanese industry is coordinated. One view is that the experience of George Brown in 1965 shows that such planning is presumptuous and absurd. The Japanese record, however, shows that it can be made to work: the targets may not be infallibly hit, but the economy does indeed grow faster, in the general direction that was intended. It would be odd for us to condemn coordination of industry and the identification of leading sectors when the most successful economy in the world relies so heavily on these techniques.

But there is more to the success of the Japanese than their effective use of indicative planning. Allen quotes the case of Mitsui which took over a bankrupt company in the early postwar years in order to acquire its three or four hundred technically qualified graduate employees. "Shouldering a deficit of from one to one and a half billion yen was no real loss if it could gain such a team of technical people." This little anecdote points many lessons. In Britain, there are alarmingly few companies with such a stock of qualified people.

We have no shortage of first rate graduates in English and Economics, and our academic scientists are excellent if not numerous. But in 1978 nearly 80,000 engineering graduates emerged from Japanese universities and colleges compared with 9,000 in Britain. However well we may plan, however well the free market may operate, we suffer from a fundamental lack of manpower which no central government, however resourceful, can compensate for by its genius in economic policy.

Our attitude to profit is a further serious handicap. On the one hand, there is the purist view, most commonly found in the City and some business schools, that profitability is a sure sign of virtue. Good management means rationalization, cutting out loss-makers, and only spending money when a profitable outcome can clearly be identified. Such is the ideology which lies behind much of the present government's thinking. Alternatively, profit is seen as a heartless and ultimately inefficient yardstick of social welfare, which both government and business should be willing to subordinate to wider considerations. So dying industries are given grants, employment is subsidized, and industrial policy becomes an inefficient arm of the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Japanese, with a very different capital market, and very different business traditions, take a third route. They habitually agree to lose money now in the general expectation that the experience and development on which the money has been spent will serve them well in the future. This attitude is unsatisfactorily vague; it involves no precise identification and quantification of the timing and amount of future profits, which is what the more rigorous business schools in America would require. It relies rather on a general confidence that if, for example, a company spends a large amount of

money on acquiring and re-training excellent technical graduates, it is bound to pay off somehow. The Japanese bring to business the same attitudes that other countries bring to research and development, and education - activities where the link between the money invested and the return is necessarily vague and cannot easily be reduced to profit and loss.

These policies have important lessons for Britain. First, it is plain that no amount of ingenuity in controlling the money supply, managing aggregate demand, devising inflation targets or exercising any of the other skills at which Britain is by international standards very expert will compensate for a cultural and educational system which does not equip people technically to do what the Japanese do. Second, we should not in future be so scornful of government or business expenditure which cannot show a quick return. Take the case of Concorde. This has plainly been a commercial disaster; no amount of creative accountancy can produce anything but a massive loss for the project looked at in isolation. But considered as a piece of R & D, or a programme for maintaining and enhancing high technical skills, it looks a great deal better. It is inconceivable that Britain would now have even the modest level of applied scientific expertise that she does if she had not been willing to spend money on advanced technical projects without any very certain prospect of commercial success.

Professor Allen's book provides a mass of detail on all aspects of the Japanese economy, varied with enough analysis and reflection to keep the reader's intellectual spirits high. It will certainly serve as an excellent general introduction to the subject; and the author's long experience of Japan and its ways will provide even the specialist with some unexpected insights.

Japanese laws and government statements about the need to "harmonize" environmental protection with the development of efficient industry without putting the phrase in ironical quotes and without implying, indeed asserting at one point, that these provisions "assured the priority of industrial concerns".

Hence, I do not always find their judgments convincing. The argument about whales and Japan's interest in a case in point. Such is the emotional intensity of the whole lobby that it is hard to know where the conservationist arguments about stocks and depletion rates end and an abhorrence for the whole idea of "harvesting" such agreeable creatures as whales begins. All this should make one as suspicious about conservationist versions of the scientific evidence for the likelihood of whale extinction as about the alternative versions preferred by the whaling companies. But these doubts do not seem to affect the authors, who are critical of Japan's position on whaling as showing an "uncertain commitment" to her obligations to the environment. The bias however makes all the more compelling their judgment that in the environmental field "there is some evidence that counter-measures in Japan have been executed more efficiently, and also more equitably, than comparable Western initiatives".

For most of the book, in any case, they are not concerned to judge or to campaign: professionalism takes over in their analysis of legal issues, their careful charting of administrative measures and the arguments developed in support of them, their lengthy summaries of individual cases. In spite of a commendable lucidity, all this takes them about 250,000 words. If the resulting price reinforces the popular prejudice that the environmentalist movement is a very well-heeled movement indeed, that would be a pity; it would be an irony too, since the Japanese environmental movement has been very much a movement of and for the urban poor.

DONALD KEENE:  
Meeting with Japan  
168pp. Tokyo: Gakuseisha. Yen 1200.  
Travels in Japan  
236pp. Tokyo: Gakuseisha. Yen 1700.

EUGENE FODOR (Editor):  
Fodor's Budget Japan '81  
186pp. Columbus Books, 24 Red Lion Street, London WC1R 4PX.  
£2.75  
0 679 00655 9

PAT BARR:  
Japan  
146pp. Batsford. £7.95.  
0 7134 0578 3

HOWARD SMITH (Editor):  
Inside Japan  
224pp. BBC Publications. £7.50.  
0 563 16300 3

"The Jap isn't a native", wrote Kipling, "and he isn't a Sahib either."

Easy enough to laugh now at those crudely antediluvian terms, stereotypes from our ignorant past; but as Endymion Wilkinson makes abundantly clear, in his *Misunderstanding: Europe versus Japan*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, the contemporary range of misunderstandings about Japan and the Japanese is really no better. In one of his two collections of brief pieces (originally written, mainly in Japanese, as specific commissions for Japanese newspapers and periodicals), Donald Keene reports the sort of reaction he tended to get when he told people in Cambridge, in the early 1950s, that he taught Japanese literature: "I suppose they got everything from the Chinese. They're nothing but a race of imitators, aren't they?" At a more practical level, there is the general notion that Japan today, and in particular Tokyo, is a pulsating, warren, impossible, crowded and complex and polluted. In its brief, brash way, the new Fodor's Guide (*Budget Japan '81*) tries to put paid to that: "Contrary to what you may suppose, Japan is easy."

"Easy" in this context, of course, means "easy for the traveller", with the corollary (given that it is a *Budget* guide) that the traveller, if he learns a trick or two, will find it

cheaper than he has been led to believe: the Japanese "manage to live there on an average per capita income just exceeding that of the Italians". Introductions and guides to Japan, and surveys of a general sort, tend to work on the assumption that the ordinary reader and/or traveller needs to be led by the hand through a maze. So the blurb to Pat Barr's *Japan* asserts: "What the Western visitor needs most especially for Japan is a clear, concise explanation of the various aspects of Japanese life which he finds so puzzling." Coming at it from another angle, Howard Smith's brief introduction to his collection of essays by various professionals in Japanese studies makes one of its main aims the dispelling of misconceptions: "In view of its significance in the world today, it is surprising how little is really known about Japan and how much of this knowledge is still based either on prejudice or on outdated stereotypes." (The book "develops some of the themes suggested by the BBC Television series *Inside Japan*", screened last year, of which Mr Smith was the producer.)

All the books I have in front of me begin from a standpoint of sympathy; all set out, at their various levels and with varying degrees of inwardness, to be explanatory. Both sympathy and explanation are not new in Western commentaries on Japan. In the 1890s and early 1900s, that strange Greek-Irish American Lafcadio Hearn was busily producing book after evangelizing book on what he believed to be both the inner and outer life of the country, whose nationality he took and in whose soil he was buried. Though a far more profound scholar, Donald Keene in a curious way shows Hearn-like proclivities in *Meeting with Japan* and *Travels in Japan*; and in fact he has been intimate with Japan for a much longer period than was Hearn - over thirty years, as compared with Hearn's fifteen or so. I am sure that Professor Keene, whose translating, editing, writing and lecturing, along with that of Edward Seidensticker and the late Ivan Morris, has been in the forefront of studies of Japanese culture during these years, would not thank me for pressing the Hearn comparison: he is a professional, Hearn was a sort of belle-traveller amateur. But Keene, writing, as I have said, mainly for a Japanese non-specialist audience, is

Hearn-like in what I would call his naive good-heartedness.

His early and later encounters with Japan, his meetings with Tanizaki, Mishima, Oe Kenzaburo and Abe Kobo, his descriptions of places as far north as Hakodate and as far south as Fukuoka, are all sketched with an emotional gentleness which can, in repeated small doses (all these essays and portraits are short), add up to an impression of insipidity. Most of them - naturally enough, given the audience for which they were written - assume a background knowledge of the foreign newcomer with lack; while the foreigner with some experience of the subject-matter may find the treatment too bland. *Meeting with Japan*, Keene writes in his Preface, "is the story of a man who found a subject, a language and a people who made his life as a scholar not only worthwhile but happy." This is said, and the story is told, with what seems to be disarming simplicity. But I could wish for rather more of the rigour and subtlety that Professor Keene has brought to his other work, such as *Landscapes and Portraits: Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (1972).

Pat Barr's book, with a chapter called "Aids for the Foreign Businessman", is part travel-guide, part explanatory introduction. The author has written some excellently researched, highly entertaining studies of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western contacts with Japan (*The Coming of the Barbarians*, *The Deer Cry Pavilion*, *A Curious Life for a Lady*). In the Batsford book she provides something at a more elementary level, penny plain and sometimes a bit plodding. Though nicely produced, it is distressingly full of misprints, with "statutory welfare officers", "ethical philosophy", and a famous work of art called the "Diabutsu". *Fodor's Budget Japan*, for all its vulgarities with headings such as "A Bit of Old Japan (Weird Alms)", is actually a more practical introduction for someone who is confronting Japan for the first time and who wants to live and travel relatively cheaply. But for anyone who wants more than encapsulated information about places it needs to be augmented with a full-scale guidebook, the best being one simply called *Japan: The New Official Guide*, compiled by the Japan

## Mapping out the maze

By Anthony Thwaite

National Tourist Organization, and a model for all such things: the most recent revision I have is the 1975 edition, which is remarkably good value at 5000 yen.

Howard Smith's BBC publication is the most searching and authoritative of these books. He has assembled six British experts, most of them employed by or connected with the Centre of Japanese Studies at Sheffield University, each of whom examines different social, cultural, economic and political aspects of contemporary Japan. They write in detail, quote statistics liberally, and make no compromises; but the stuff is highly readable, and very well and imaginatively illustrated - as one would hope, given the television origin of the book. Even Douglas Anthony's chapter "Economic growth and industrial competition" was far more comprehensible and pleasant than I had feared.

When I first set off for Japan in 1955, newly married and embarking on my first job, there was nothing like the sheer quantity available to-day of explanatory, introductory, practical (or indeed impractical) publications. Japan's "miracle", its soaring flight to economic and technological importance during the past him."

### Zen Action/Zen Person T. P. Kasulis

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Zen Action/Zen Person  
T. P. Kasulis

Calligraphy of Lin Chi's TRUE PERSON OF NO STATUS by  
Bishop Kyodo Fujihama of the Jodo Mission of Hawaii

## The poor against pollution

By Ronald Dore

JULIAN GRESSER, KOICHIRO FUJIKURA and AKIO MORISHIMA:  
Environmental Law in Japan  
525pp. MIT Press. £37.20.  
062 070 76 6

Among the many ingenious defensive reactions which help us to keep our *amour propre* safe from the thought that we might actually have something to learn from the Japanese are miscellaneous variants on Sir Roy Denman's theme of "a nation of workaholics content to live in a squalid hutch". One such variant relates to the supposed docility of the Japanese in the face of overbearing authority, whether exercised by officialdom or big business. Another relates to the social costs of Japan's economic advance: "the production-first ideology has made Japan the most polluted country in the world", and so on.

And yet, one of the folk-heroes of modern Japan is Tanaka Shozo, a splendid old Confucian ecologist who "cared for mountains, forests and rivers" and already in the 1890s was leading peasants in their thousands in demonstrations and protest marches against a copper mine, effluents from which were polluting their land. Tanaka, as Kenneth Strong described him in his charming and vivid biography, *On Against the Storm*, as "an irascible man... a peasant and fervid parliamentarian; careless of his person and possessions and not at all averse to interrupting a conversation to de-louse his kimono; with little formal education but much reading; not a little of it achieved in prison; given to jotting down poems to record his moods or amuse his friends; a collector of small shapely stones picked up by the riverside."

With his uncompromising and slightly eccentric individualism went a certain shrewdness. The protests forced the

government to act: the effluents were controlled at considerable expense to the mine and compensation was paid.

The story of Tanaka's campaign against the Ashio copper mine ninety years ago makes a fitting opening to Gresser, Fujikura and Morishima's exhaustive study of the development of Japan's environmental law, over the last twenty years. It sets a pattern, they suggest, many of the themes of which have recurred in the pollution disputes of recent years: the victims' preference for collective action to the assertion of individual rights; the resort to petition and demonstration rather than judicial suit; the polluter's common recourse to offers of monetary compensation rather than more costly preventive measures; the preference of administrative authorities for propitiation, mediation and compromise rather than adjudication according to the exact prescription of specific legislation.

The authors are lawyers and a good deal of the book is taken up with detailed analysis of legal issues. But they do not neglect the general social and political context, and they begin this book with a lucid account of the historical record. First, they recount some of the other pollution incidents in the early part of the century, a high proportion of which were settled after mediation. Industry had powerful friends in a nation determined on forced-march industrialization, but protesting citizens often carried the day. The courts were not often involved, but when they were they sometimes responded in an innovative way; the Osaka High Court, for instance, in 1919, defined as culpable negligence the failure to use the best available scientific knowledge to control pollution.

But it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that environmental matters steadily gained prominence in public discussion. In part this was an internal reflection of a growing internal demand, but the chief impetus was provided by four famous cases. Three of these involved particularly horrible diseases, finally traced to mercury and

cadmium poisoning, and each had the same impact as the thalidomide scandal in Britain. The publicity which attended the victims' attempt to seek redress, and the record of evasion and indifference, in particular of one of the companies concerned, caused a wave of indignation, which, as the authors say, "has traumatized Japanese society beyond any Western experience of pollution". Some of their translations of the victims' vividly emotional descriptions of their experiences, both of the disease and of their dealings with companies and courts, explain why.

By the mid-1960s, "citizens' movements" against local sources of pollution had become a rapid increase; one pre-emptive movement, which forced cancellation of plans for a petrochemical complex on the coast below Mount Fuji, finally made the environment a central issue of national politics. A basic law was passed as an all-party measure in 1967, which, after much bargaining between the parties, established the principle that protection of public health should always take precedence over industrial promotion, even if "conservation of the living environment" might sometimes have to be sacrificed for other economic gains.

The movement grew. By 1969 individuals, or more often citizen's movements, were registering complaints at the rate of 40,000 a year. The 1970 Diet passed no fewer than fourteen laws or amendments related to the environment. At that point, Japan caught up, on legal terms, with the United States, the heartland of the environmental movement. In 1973 Japan moved ahead in legal innovation, with a law for the compensation of pollution-related health injury, and in practice, by gradually enacting, and steadily enforcing, ambient standards a good deal stricter than in most countries. By 1974, four per cent of industrial investment was in pollution-control machinery; three times the Swedish proportion. Attention shifted partially to noise-pollution and "the right to sun-

shine" as the courts imposed tough restrictions on the operations of Osaka airport and amplified the powers of small property-owners to prevent developers from overshadowing them with tower blocks.

In the analytical chapters with which the authors follow this historical account they take up a number of themes: the development of new rights and remedies in civil and administrative law - the development of judicial interpretations of "tolerable limits" for example, and the extension of the powers of injunction; the operations of the Japanese administrative and policy-making process (with consensus operating at its best in the early 1970s; perhaps, they suggest, subtly moving to subvert standards in later years as public attention has dwindled); the operation of the compensation law and the technical and legal problems involved; the mediation system, a formalization of the social patterns already evident in Tanaka's day, which the authors commend to other countries; and finally the development of Japan's policy in international environmental issues, notably towards plans for Japanese investment in United States trust territory in the Pacific.

The authors (one of them a former "Nader rider") make no secret of the fact that they are "environmentalists". The environmental movement belongs to the long tradition of human rights campaigning, and such campaigns tend by their very nature to deal in absolutes. There is not much room for the subtleties of trade-off. How much discomfort can people be expected to tolerate in return for how much convenience derived from an airport or from a noisy or smelly factory? And how should those who enjoy the convenience compensate those who suffer from the nuisance?

Campaigners tend to consider such questions as mystifications designed to blunt the attack of the righteous on those who would despoil our natural heritage or greedily seek profits at the community's expense. The authors cannot translate the phrases in

## A tremendissimo tour

By Fosco Maraini

ALBERTO ARBASINO:  
Trans-Pacific Express  
220pp. Milan: Garzanti. L.8500.

During the 1970s Alberto Arbasino visited a number of countries around the Pacific, making copious notes and writing brilliant articles for Italian papers. Now an assortment of all this material has been published in book form.

Signor Arbasino is extraordinarily good on the subject that pleases him, when all the capricious baroque splendour of his prose makes sense. His chapter on Bali, for instance, is delightful, carrying his reader through night and day, through field, lane and village square, running after folk theatricals and local festivals, as if under a spell.

Arbasino's Italian is distinctive and highly personal - and therefore very difficult to translate. He makes full and continuous use of all those suffixes (-ino, -one, -issimo, -accio, -ullo) so characteristic of Italian, which instantly change ordinary nouns and adjectives into things comic or microscopic, lovable or detestable, puny or superlative. The subject here takes over the object and transforms it according to a sec-

ret music of the emotions. How could one translate into English, for instance, an expression which appears so often in Arbasino's prose, namely *tremendissimo*? *Tremendissimo* may mean hateful, frightful, horrid, but also impressive, curiously delicate, superb and many things more.

Australia was, of course, *tremendissima*, and a strange liaison sprung up between the Latin aesthete and the robust Antipodeans. Arbasino sees Sydney's new Theatre of Arts as a bunch of turtles bugging one another, but he likes the place and its people, the distant views and the unexpected intellectual discussions. China, visited in 1980, has by far the longest chapter in the book, though here Arbasino seems to be forcing himself into appreciation. He does, however, take an original and brilliant stand in favour of Mme Chang-Ching, seen as an actress in that live show, the Trial of the Gang of Four, part of which Arbasino happened to see on television.

When he reaches Japan, however, his reactions are instantaneously negative. Japan is a strong drink. People either fall in love with it or are revolted or convulsed by its effects. Indifference is rare, and Arbasino squarely joins the Japan haters: a club which includes Freda Utey, W. H. Chamberlin, Lord Russell, Willard Price, Upton Close, and many others, arguably including

Arthur Koestler. But most Japan haters have been so mainly on moral grounds. Signor Arbasino does not belong to this group. He could not care less. His reactions are everywhere and exclusively an aesthetic's.

Nobody would deny that Japanese cities are *tremendissimamente* ugly, and that many aspects of Japanese life are confused and chaotic. But Arbasino's reactions extend from this surface to all aspects of the country. In some cases his attitude prevents him from being accurate or well informed. The tea ceremony for instance disgusts him ("Why not have a chocolate ceremony?") - but he takes no trouble to see beyond the Western term for this event. No Japanese ever spoke of *Cha no Gishiki* (which is the re-translation into Japanese of "tea ceremony"); the expression normally used is *Cha no yu*, "tea's hot water", a fact of everyday usage which sheds an entirely different light on the proceedings. The expression "tea ceremony" suggests something stiff and starchy; *cha no yu* opens the door to intimacy and refinement. And as for many sweeping generalizations, for instance on Japanese art as "having constantly ignored every aspect of youthfulness, beauty, happiness, pleasure and refinement. One can only pass in review a prodigious artistic output going from hanji to Buddhas of Chu-gu-ji or Sanzen-ji, to *hetairae* of Kiyonaga or Utamaro."

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## The two-way trade in distortion

By Richard Storry

ENDYMION WILKINSON:

Misunderstanding: Europe versus Japan  
29pp. Tokyo: Chuokoron-Sha.  
Yen 1200.  
0030 001438 4622

This instructive study of a highly topical subject was originally published in Japanese last year and quickly became, it seems, something of a best-seller. That is not surprising. The Japanese, always curious to know what outsiders think of them, were bound to be particularly interested in the views and recommendations of a knowledgeable figure such as Endymion Wilkinson, an Englishman with some six years' experience of Japan as head of the economic section of the EEC Delegation in Tokyo.

It is probably true to say that most Japanese are disheartened by indications that the triumphant advance of their country's economy is viewed with misgivings by much of the European business world. Two years have gone by since the substance of a confidential EEC report on trade friction with Japan leaked out to the press, when two phrases in the report acquired instant notoriety. The Japanese, said the report, were "workaholics" living in homes that "Westerners would regard as little more than rabbit hutchies". This was not very flattering to *amur prope*, especially in view of the fact that a famous earlier comment by the late Mr. Bhutto, suggesting that the Japanese were "economic animals", had by no means been forgotten. The language of the EEC report attracted particular notice, no doubt, because like most caricatures it contained a measure of truth. Enormously high land prices do compel people in Japan to live in small flats and houses, sophisticated in terms of their household equipment though these may be. And most people in Japan do put their backs into any

job they undertake and appear, very rightly, to derive satisfaction from so doing.

Now Endymion Wilkinson cites an Asahi *Shimbu* national public opinion poll showing that nearly 60% of those polled felt that "rabbit hutchies" and "workaholics" were a fair description of their situation. What was not relished was the fact that these comments came from a foreign source. In this instance, therefore, can it not be argued that the "misunderstanding" on the European side does not relate to the facts - the cramped living conditions and the addiction to hard work - and for this reason is not really a misunderstanding at all? Be that as it may, genuine misunderstandings arising from distorted images date back many years; and in the first half of his book Wilkinson traces the history of Japan's relations with Europe since the sixteenth century, covering ground familiar to specialists, and he is able to point out the exaggerations and plain inaccuracies that coloured European interpretations of the Japanese scene. Japanese-European relations after a promising beginning were largely severed in the early seventeenth century, thereafter remaining extremely tenuous for over two hundred years. During that period, as Wilkinson observes, "educated Europeans, if they thought about Japan at all, were convinced that it was a rich appanage of China". This view, he goes on, "has beclouded the European perception of East Asia and Japan right up to our own time". As evidence of this he cites a Japanese report of 1977 claiming that in five European countries a majority of high school children believed Japan to be a part of China.

Yet Europeans with some first-hand knowledge of Japan often painted a picture of the land and its society that exaggerated the differences between the cultures of East and West. Wilkinson's short term for his body of distortions is "the Up-side-Down Land". Pierre Loti, needless to say, is seen as one of the

prime offenders here; but so is Lafcadio Hearn. According to Wilkinson, Loti and Hearn and other writers (including Kipling) depicted Japan either as a society essentially lightweight and frivolous (dolls-like women, very accessible to young foreign globe-trotters and sailors) or curiously mysterious, and in the end incomprehensible to the European mind. Wilkinson does not exclude that famous Japanologist, Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, from the company of those guilty of distorting the picture. He quotes a passage from *Things Japanese*, where Hall Chamberlain points out that the foreign resident, even after years of living in Japan, may still "be pulled up sharp, and forced to explain that all his experience does not yet suffice to probe the depths of the mental disposition of this fascinating but enigmatical race". Wilkinson, with a certain hardihood, dismisses this as the view of "a prejudiced 19th century European professor".

If the European view of Japan, more often than not, has been partial and one-sided, veering between extremes of fascinated, affectionate interest and fearful dislike, the Japanese outlook on Europe has tended to follow the same pattern, but with one important qualification: the Japanese have always known a very great deal more about Europe, especially Britain, even before the war. Many, then, Europeans have known about Japan. But here too distortions are not lacking. The Japanese, as Wilkinson puts it, regard Western Europe as a "Cultural Museum" - which, of course, does describe one important and admirable element of the region's total structure. But there seems to be a tendency in Japan, especially within the last fifteen or twenty years, to place excessive emphasis on this aspect of the matter; for the corollary here is that in the field of high technology Europe is regarded (since it is a "museum") as somewhat backward. And yet who could argue that the distortion implied by this view is totally unjustified? As Wilkinson himself admits, "Europe offers to the Japanese visi-

tor those jewels of the tourist trade - cultural monuments, good shopping and exotic sex - all at reasonable prices and all set in an elegant stagnation".

The final section of this thoughtful study is entitled "What Is To Be Done?". It is divided into two parts, the first concerned with means to improve European-Japanese economic and trade relations, the second with those to improve communications between Europe and Japan. For a start, the EEC should endeavour to speak with one voice. The author tells us that a few years ago the Council of Europe called upon Japan to reduce her shipbuilding capacity; but, just after that earnest appeal had been made, a Danish shipping company ordered six bulk carriers from Japanese shipyards. Then the point is made that the timing and causes of European trade disputes almost invariably follow the same pattern. A "domestic business downturn" in Japan, or an outside factor such as a huge increase in oil prices, greatly enhances "pressure to export". If this coincides with a recession in Europe, and Japanese exports are concentrated in a labour-intensive sector, trade friction occurs. Wilkinson believes that if the causes of friction are clear it should be possible for the EEC and Japan "to warn each other in time to take remedial actions before the outbreak of actual frictions". Since the institutional framework for bilateral consultations already exists.

Looking ahead to the rest of this decade, and into the 1990s, the Japanese, as the author tells us, have clearly signalled their export intentions. They will move increasingly into knowledge-intensive industries (such as microchip electronics, computers, and numerically controlled machine tools). So the Europeans should begin to meet the challenge by restructuring their own industries on similar lines, and by investing in the Japanese market so as to create the infrastructure for sophisticated exports from Europe.

On a broader front in Europe a great deal could and should be done, in terms of encouraging knowledge of Japan in general undergraduate courses; while in Japan there is a need for more centres of European studies. Implicit in all this is the belief that by such means the impact of distorted and out-of-date mutual images can be greatly reduced, although not perhaps entirely eliminated. One has to be optimistic. To anyone with some firsthand experience of both societies no more unnecessary rift could occur than that between a democratic Western Europe and a Japan pacific and industrious, operating within the structure of the 1946 Constitution.

Inevitably - it is central to his argument - Wilkinson underplays the real differences, for example in religion, culture and psychology, that distinguish Japan and Europe from one another. He is right to emphasize that concentration on these differences has been all too often excessive, and thus in varying degrees harmful. But there is also some risk involved for the European, when dealing with a Japanese counterpart, if he imagines that there is nothing particularly strange to be encountered that a fluent interpreter of the language cannot fully elucidate.

All in all, this is a book of considerable interest and some importance. Its message indeed must become increasingly significant as international communications continue to develop, with travel time becoming inexorably shorter as the decades pass. Finally, the author should be congratulated on his choice of illustrations, most of them humorous, not least those borrowed from the Japanese press. Moreover, the reader in Europe who still doubts whether the Japanese can laugh at themselves is refuted by the cover which Chuokoron-sha have chosen for this paperback. This is a cartoon in colour of a bespectacled, grinning samurai in helmet and full armour, with two swords and a strong bow, riding towards the reader on a (Suzuki?) motorbike.

merits in his friend's work. He was a draftsman in the finest of traditional and occidental traditions; in his earlier works he was accurate and delicate. But great? Somehow one gets the impression that Selz has his doubts about Foujita's greatness and when he comes to those compositions which were executed after Foujita's reception into the Church he is obliged sadly to admit that there was a failure of inspiration. Understandably, we are not shown any of the religious frescoes from the chapel of our Lady of Peace in Rheims, nor does Selz reproduce those canvases in which Foujita celebrated the military glory of Japan from 1941 until 1944, and yet one must regret the absence of two such unexpected chapters in the painter's life.

The 1920s stand at the worst possible distance in time for us to be fair to their art. Selz makes a case for Foujita but fails to convince; and it may be that he fails because the taste of our time does not permit us to be as indulgent or as perceptive as we might be. But it must also be said that he is too honest a critic not to express his doubts and reservations. Those of us who cannot admire this painter are unlikely to be converted by his words. Those who still believe in the greatness of Foujita may perhaps be disappointed by so cautious an advocate.

## The crime of the commanders

By Geoffrey Best

LAWRENCE TAYLOR:

A Trial of Generals:  
Homma, Yamashita, MacArthur  
236pp. New York: Icarus Press.  
\$39.95.  
0 89651 775 6

When Moise Tshombe escaped with his life from Katanga, his successors in office and power demanded that he be returned from his north African sanctuary "for a Nuremberg trial". That was not the idea of "Nuremberg" held among the "western" members of the victorious anti-fascist coalition which mounted the famous trials there, but it was no doubt the idea most commonly to be found in the world afterwards. Why go to all the trouble and publicity of putting defeated enemy leaders in the dock unless it was to display their guilt and pave their way to punishment? The Soviet Union, of course, approached the event with this in mind, and so also must have done many in "the west". Nazism, after all, really was extraordinarily evil. But habit, principle and politics proved too much for them: habits of "fair play", forgiveness and forgetfulness; principles of liberal constitutionalism; and in the background, slow and secretive but sure enough as the first frosts of the Cold War began to bite, a sense of impending re-reversal. Of the twenty-two representative Nazis and German militarists picked to stand trial at Nuremberg proper - the International Military Tribunal, that is, not the hardly less important American-run trials which took place there subsequently - three got off scot-free and four whom the Russians would have hanged were sentenced to less than life imprisonment.

Nuremberg proper, with all its admitted defects and confusions, was in fact a noble exercise of constructive idealism, conceived and carried out in a much more creditable way than might have been expected. The International Military Tribunal at Tokyo a year or so later, which tried to do the same for the Far East, suffered from similar defects and confusions and to a somewhat greater extent invited the charge of being "victors' justice", but it was not disparagingly conceived or conducted. Nor were many of the war crimes trials conducted under the victors' own national jurisdictions (the "Belsen trial" by the British, the "Extermination Squad trial" by the Americans, the "Oradour trial" by the French, and so on); the law of war, however patchily, can now be seen to have been flouted by them.

But not all national war crimes trials left humankind so useful a legacy. The "Nuremberg trials" in the Zairean sense did not happen at Nuremberg at all. Soviet and Soviet-influenced ones, while not all necessarily unjust in their results, were of course politically determined; and some of the "western" ones were so lacking in fairness in varying degrees as subsequently to become matters of embarrassment, shame and regret. Among these latter were the two very early ones at Manila (October 1945 and January 1946) which form the subject of this book.

Part of their peculiarity lies in their having been set up by a peculiar sort of soldier, that "American

Cesar", General Douglas MacArthur. One of the United States' most senior soldiers, noted not least for the chivalric ideals he delighted publicly to claim for his profession, vain and sometimes self-deluding but charismatic and courageous, he had been in military command of the Philippines at the time of the Japanese assault in late 1941, and he had lost them. "I will return", he promised, and return he did, at the head of a vast Allied armada, adequately backed by newsmen, at the end of 1944. In charge of the Japanese forces was General Yamashita, only recently arrived from Manchukuo where he had been cooling his heels since his remarkable seizure of Singapore three years before. Inferior in numbers and equipment, dispersed and increasingly disordered, the Japanese fought with their accustomed tenacity but to little effect. By the time their Emperor's surrender allowed them at last to follow suit (in mid-August 1945), they had been pushed back into the mountains and forests, and their conqueror had moved on to the capture of Japan itself. On the same day that Yamashita himself surrendered, September 2, MacArthur received his country's submission in Tokyo Bay.

Prominent by then in the mind not only of MacArthur but also of every other American, and of a great many western Europeans too, were horror, amazement and indignation at the scale and nature of the atrocities found to have been committed wherever Japan had conquered and occupied; and with that horror and indignation, of course, came an urgent desire that the guilty should be punished. The victorious allies having long since determined to satisfy that wholly justifiable desire by public judicial processes, it was to such that MacArthur immediately turned to deal with the atrocities which had affected him most closely - those committed in his beloved Philippines. While one of his offices set to work on a laborious Tokyo "Nuremberg" for major alleged criminals, another office was commissioned to bring all the others more quickly to trial before US military courts set up under MacArthur's supreme authority and according to his specifications.

Lawrence Taylor, an experienced American lawyer and legal writer, analyses these specifications with admirable clarity. They were not, as fundamentally bad and inexcusable as he makes out, but they certainly made things difficult for the defence, and they were certainly calculated to give the panels of five generals charged with delivering judgment a sense that MacArthur was breathing impatiently down their necks. But what was more troubling to the juridically sensitive, and what has made these trials so controversial ever since, was the doctrine asserted in them, that a commanding officer is responsible for every action of his subordinates, whether carried out according to his command and with his knowledge, or not.

That very dreadful thing were done by the Japanese forces in the Philippines under the command of Homma in 1941-42 and of Yamashita in 1944-45, no one could doubt - except, curiously and significantly,

those generals themselves when first told about them. (Their doubts were soon dispelled by irresistible evidence.) The diffused atrocity of the "Death March" of the American and Filipino prisoners in early 1942 through Bataan to their places of captivity was awful, as was the condition of the much diminished numbers of prisoners still alive when MacArthur's return rescued them nearly three years later. But even worse in the sombre calendar of war atrocities was what the crumbling Japanese forces did to the Filipino population during their last demoralized months among them, and in particular what they did to Manila and its people before immolating themselves in its ruins. About 60,000 civilians of both sexes and all ages were butchered in a most brutal fashion - a deed that was immediately labelled, with some justice, "the Rape of Manila".

At their trials, Homma and Yamashita and their defence counsel (who enjoyed, it should be said, complete freedom of speech) claimed that they had neither ordered nor known of these atrocities. Among the reasons they advanced for this were that they were preoccupied elsewhere, that their difficulties were enormous, that their chains of command were defective, that their nominal subordinates had proved unfaithful, that war was war, and so on. It was perhaps not very edifying and it might not have been thought to reflect creditably on the Japanese army and navy (it was in fact naval personnel who were responsible for most of the slaughter in Manila), but so far as Homma and Yamashita personally were concerned it was true, and by the end of their trials (of which the author provides a convincing picture) everyone had to believe it. They had not ordered these atrocities, and had known little or nothing about them. Nevertheless it was held by the courts that they ought to have anticipated and prevented them. In the words of the judgment on Yamashita, they "failed to provide effective control of [their] troops as was required by the circumstances". An appeal on Yamashita's behalf to the US Supreme Court having failed, he was hanged in February 1946; Homma was shot in April; and a new doctrine of "command responsibility" was thus added to the melting-pot into which the laws of war had been thrown after 1945.

Generals Homma and Yamashita are presented in this volume as noble and sympathetic losers, much wronged by a prejudiced and self-indulgent victor. It is indeed impossible, both for believers in the rule of law and to regret MacArthur's pre-emptiveness, and for any reader of these pages (which seem to rest upon a modest bibliography of English-language publications) not to understand that when he initiated these prosecutions he, like no doubt the bulk of American and Filipino peoples, believed these Japanese commanders to have been more directly responsible than the evidence, produced in court showed them to have

been. It looks very much as if, whatever their responsibility had been, they were going to be found guilty in any case; and therefore that the great idea of justice was being dragged in the mud. This was an aspect of the Yamashita case which particularly impressed the two Justices of the Supreme Court, Murphy and Rutledge, who dissented from the majority judgment of six that there was no cause for them to intervene. Rutledge flatly denied that this had been "a trial in the traditions of the common law and the Constitution"; Murphy put his finger on the motives which might have explained such a departure when he remarked that "An uncurbed spirit of revenge and retribution, masked in formal legal procedure for purposes of dealing with a fallen enemy commander, can do more lasting harm [to the US, to posterity, etc.] than all of the atrocities giving rise to that spirit".

This is not to say, however, that the defendants should have got off scot-free, as their counsel came to think then and as Taylor thinks still. An irony in these cases, which has evidently much contributed to his passionate interest in them, is that Generals Homma and Yamashita were actually among the most moderate and decent of their kind. Though exceedingly competent at their professional work, both were disliked by the Prime Minister, General Tojo, and his aggressive-minded party, because both had been men of moderation in the 1930s, concerned especially to keep their country from becoming embroiled in war with the United States and the European empires. Homma and Yamashita in fact were both, by Japanese army standards, "softies" and, by Euro-American standards, gentlemen; and the elderly Homma "looked a gentleman" too, though the chunky bull-necked Yamashita, whose sobriquet "the Tiger of Malaya" it was too easy to misconstrue, unfortunately did not. Of all high-ranking officers of the Japanese armed forces it is doubtful whether any less deserved to be made the first examples of the indignant victors' justice, and Taylor not unreasonably devotes his early chapters to extolling his subjects' virtues and to working up sympathy on their behalf. His case would have carried more weight had it not been written in prose at times so over-lush that Homma's plain little poems come as welcome relief.

But was "command responsibility" after all, such an unreasonable doctrine to assert? And had not these generals some responsibility for what happened? Admittedly the doctrine was new when MacArthur and his army lawyers produced it (after consultations with Washington? Taylor has not gone into that at all), and he might have reflected that his own kind would hardly bless him for having done so, their personal responsibilities in war being thereby so much the more increased. But the fact is that after some more careful applications in other war crimes trials it became a more or less regular part of armed forces' law in the

United States and many other countries, including our own, to such an extent that, later, American defenders of their country's conduct of the war in Vietnam found it difficult to explain why the standards applied to Yamashita and Homma should not be applied to Abrams and Westmoreland. If they didn't know what kind of a war was actually going on under their command, they ought to have known!

It is possible that had Homma and Yamashita been brought to trial after "Nuremberg" had got well under way, they would have benefited from the plea of "mitigating circumstances" so regularly entered thereafter. Some leniency on those grounds might in any case have been extended, if their judges had been drawn from the combat zone rather than the office-desk. They were made to pay too high a penalty. But that is not to say they should have paid no penalty at all. Guilt by association should not concern upholders of the rule of law, but persistent maintenance of a guilty association may be legitimate cause for unease. The Japanese army of the 1930s and early 1940s was in many respects a dangerous and nasty organization, its noble, chivalrous and honourable parts smothered by association with its brutality, ruthlessness, factionalism, fanaticism, deliberately cultivated ignorance of the outside world, and racialist contempt for the victims of the imperialist aggressiveness of its political leaders. Homma and Yamashita tried to dissociate themselves from the latter when their irrational ambitions led them to attack the United States, but they shared the common belief of their officer caste that it was all right to carve out a Japanese empire in China, where at least four million are reckoned to have died at Japanese hands between 1937 and 1945, and where the conduct of the Japanese army set an early example of atrocities which no European army (the German SD and SS proper were not an army) ever matched. American and European prisoners were generally treated better by the Japanese than were Chinese, Filipinos and other despised fellow-Asians, but 27 per cent of them nevertheless died in captivity (as against 4 per cent of those taken prisoner by Germany). Many survivors retained to the end of their days - days all too often shortened by their experiences - ineradicable impressions that the Japanese army included, along with its better elements and traditions, some exceptionally bad ones; so bad, so often deliberately cruel and heartless, that they were, by European and American standards, almost inexplicable.

That was the army in which Generals Homma and Yamashita were distinguished commanding officers; and it may still be asked, as General MacArthur must have asked himself thirty-six years ago, whether they should not be held in some measure responsible for the way their armies behaved, whether they expressly ordered it or not, since such was by then well known - like it or not - to be their normal style.

## The arts of charming

By Quentin Bell

JEAN SELZ:  
Foujita  
96pp. Bonfini Press. £4.95.

If you are one of those who enjoy and admire the works of Foujita - and there are many who do - you will also enjoy this book. There are many illustrations, the colour reproductions are very convincing: the text by Jean Selz is agreeable and although he may not satisfy this artist's most ardent admirers, he does tell them a great deal, and much that they are unlikely to know.

But for those of us who have for the past fifty years or so felt a distrust amounting almost to dislike for the work of Foujita, the interest of this little book is historical rather than critical. The artist arouses our curiosity because he is remarkable, not as a painter, but as a phenomenon. He stands as an example of the stranger who, coming from another culture, learns with deliberate brilliance to adapt his own deft manual skills to the needs of the European market.

Foujita left Japan and came to

Paris before 1914 and, for a brief period painted careful pastiches of the Douanier Rousseau, pastiches which had something of Utrillo about them and something also which suggested a quiet and genuine observation of nature. After many wanderings he returned to France, became a Catholic, died and was buried in his adopted country.

But the period of his greatest efflorescence and success was that of the interwar years; it was then that he seemed most completely to adorn the scene, one found his work in every shop window of the Rue de Seine and the Rue de la Boétie. He seemed to belong and in some sort of way even to have created that gilded age of the Ecole de Paris which followed the "heroic days" of the Fauves and the Cubists; the age when those struggling young artists had become prosperous and middle-aged, when modern art had "arrived" and in arriving had lost something en route. It was an age when we became sadly aware that we had nothing to put in its place.

Great liberties had been won, such as the freedom to paint as one pleased unfettered by nature or by tradition. But many of the pioneers seemed, when they could at last please themselves, to have no end

but to please others, that is to say to please a public with expensive tastes. Derain, Dufy, Marie Laurencin and Vlaminck seemed now to devote themselves to the art of charming. They cultivated a kind of decorative prettiness which was very acceptable to a wealthy public - and until 1929 there was indeed a wealthy public at hand. There were still some giants in our midst, relics of a former age who had remained incorruptible but it did appear that their epoch was over and we had entered the era of the epigoni. France was still, in our imaginations, the metropolis of the visual arts, the home of all that was new and honest; but it began to seem that she had exhausted herself after a century and more of splendid innovations.

Foujita was not to blame for any of this but his enormous success was a symptom of our malady, he seemed the very type and symbol of that hectic and barren epoch, he belonged to it entirely, he offered it a gift for attractive colour, a flair for the kind of self-statement which seemed to combine all that was most charmingly effective in oriental and Parisian elegance. He was supremely decorative, wonderfully articulate, prolific in seductive phrases, richly eloquent in his pictorial language and poor only in that he had abso-

lutely nothing to say that was of the slightest importance. He was just what Paris wanted in the 1920s, that city which Selz evokes in nostalgic phrases, the city of the Surrealist Manifesto, the Boeuf sur le toit, Harry's New York Bar and Le Café du Dome.

Jean Selz is a gifted and perceptive critic and here he is devoting a monograph to Foujita in a series which includes such names as Degas, Cézanne, Picasso and Turner. But can he, one asks oneself as one opens this slim but glossy volume, can he mount so spirited a defence of his subject that we shall have to admit that we were wrong about Foujita after all; wrong too it may be, about Paris in the 1920s? Certainly he has the advantage of knowing his subject well. He knew the artist personally and he has studied his works with attention. He tells us that Foujita was an amiable, modest, unpretentious person with a catholic taste in girls. He was unsopit by success, his tastes and his affections were simple and sincere; he was afflicted with a not unsympathetic inability to deal with his income tax; one would have liked to have known him. All this is nicely expressed and one believes in it. But was Foujita a great artist? Selz never altogether answers this question. He finds great

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OF GREAT BRITAIN

# The asymmetrical archipelago

By James Kirkup

HIROAKI SATO and BURTON WATSON (Editors and translators): From the Country of Eight Islands An Anthology of Japanese Poetry 652pp. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday. \$9.95. 0 385 14030 4

In his excellent introduction to this truly monumental anthology, Thomas Rimer, discussing the classic eighth-century compilation, the *Manyōshū*, stresses what has always appeared to be the outstanding merit of Japanese poetry:

Nor was the composition of poetry reserved to particular gifted individuals. Rather, poetry was a part of daily life, a means of expression for anyone who felt the need to manifest emotion through ordered language.

This is still true, even in the materialist and utilitarian Japan of today, where, despite a revival of interest in traditional culture which includes the writing of *haiku* and *tanka*, pure literature seems to take a back seat behind the more visual arts of fashion design, flower arrangement and the tea ceremony.

Dr Rimer also mentions the "openness, directness of expression, and intensity of feeling" in the *Manyōshū*, and says such qualities were true to the national character. This could hardly be said of the present-day "national character" of the Japanese in general, but certainly it is still true of her artists and poets, and in this volume we find many moving expressions of those vital poetic qualities, most strikingly in the modern age that may be said to begin with Hagiwara Sakurako's collection *Tsuki ni hoeru* (Howling at the Moon, University of Tokyo Press) of 1917.

In considering the nature of Japanese poetry, and indeed all poetry of the East, we must abandon most of our Western preconceptions of what good poetry must be. Analytical approaches, "practical criticism" and so on have no place here. Perhaps this is one reason why the poetry of the Orient is so little appreciated, at least by British poets, who look back with a wary eye upon the Imagists, Ezra Pound, Lafcadio Hearn, Yone Noguchi and Amy Lowell.

We can begin to understand the differences between Western and Japanese poetry if we study carefully all aspects of Japanese art, with its sense of imbalanced balance in composition, and its reverberating "empty" spaces that are like speaking silences. Western poetry is symmetrical, Japanese poetry asymmetrical. In this respect, Japanese poetry closely resembles Japanese painting, composition and design.

We find asymmetry in those

almost dizzyingly oblique perspectives of the *Genji Monogatari* and other classical scrolls, in the dislocated (and dislocating) compositions of wood-block prints and *kakemono* — the sliding, insecure effect of tilted verandas, sloping mats on which figures lean and float rather than sit or stand; they are somehow not quite earthbound in their capzoring universe. In the miraculous *shunga*, the exquisite erotic fantasies created by Utamaro and other classical artists (and still forbidden by the censor in Japan), we revel in extremes of physical sensation and heights of harmonious displacement.

So it is advisable to adopt an oblique approach to the East, though this can be difficult or impossible for many rationalist Western minds. The archipelago of Japan is itself oblique, laid aslant the globe as it were, and it seems as if the light falls in a unique way in those islands, creating new outlines and unexpected relationships between things, and giving colours and shadows an unusual intensity never found in Britain, a poignant immediacy that underlines the impermanence of life, the fleeting nature of "this floating world". This is evident in all Japanese poetry, so full of the changing lights of nature and the seasons. It is why, instead of confronting a Japanese poem head-on one has to insinuate oneself into the mood as well as the meaning of the work, whether in reading or in translation. One has to observe the pauses, the tilted hesitations, and above all the silences implicit in the apparently most clear and forthright statements; to remember that when a Japanese says "Yes" he often means "No", and that when he smiles or laughs it is sometimes an expression of shock, pain, sorrow or embarrassment. One has always to read between the lines, and between the words, and between the characters.

This is what the present translators do most admirably. Dr Rimer quotes Burton Watson on a *tanka* by Senjamaru, on the subtle ambiguities of sound and sense, the delicate play on words, the repetitions of certain consonants and particles; here is the poem:

Kore ya kono  
yuku mo kaeru mo  
wakaretsutsu  
shiru mo shiranu mo  
Ausaka no seki  
This is the spot —  
where those going, those returning  
take their leave,  
those who know each other, those who  
don't —  
the barrier at Meeting Slope

And the translator comments: It is euphony and musical resonances of this type, and the intrinsic flowing quality of the language, rather than elaborate prosodic devices, that in most cases account for the particular appeal of Japanese poetry in the original.

In this magnificent collection, which includes poems from the earliest times to the present day, we find that the translators, as well as seeking to be faithful to the originals, have produced versions that, as far as possible in English, preserve those resonances, and this despite the fact that Watson sometimes leaves *makura kotoba*, the set phrases of "pillow words", untranslated — a practice Sato deplores. But these translators are not self-centred. Translation, particularly from the often imprecise language of Japanese, involves the art of choosing to use what most people would consider to be unimportant words — choosing between a definite and an indefinite article, between plural and singular nouns and verbs. Such discrimination demands mastery of English, and Sato is one of the very rare Japanese who can use English vocabulary and poetic style with originality and confidence: I have long been an admirer of his dazzling versions of modern Japanese poets, particularly Takahashi Mutsuo's *Poems of a Penitent* (Chicago Review Press) and from the same press Tomioka Taeko's *See You Soon* — she is one of the outstanding new women poets represented in this volume.

One of the revelations of this anthology is the presentation of the art of *renga*, most recently discussed illuminatingly by Earl Miner in his book *Japanese Linked Poetry* (Princeton University Press). The collaboration of several poets in the composition of a long, linked poem may seem improbable to British poets, but the pleasures of making such group poems are particularly intense. One of the largest sections in *From the Country of Eight Islands* is entitled "The Age of Renga". By the fourteenth century, the division of the formal 31-syllable *tanka* into two smaller parts of 5-7-5 and 7-7 syllables encouraged the development of the *renga* form and the more popular *haikai*. In this anthology most of the *haikai* and *tanka* and *renga* translations are printed in one-line form.

Modern and contemporary Japanese poets have always been strongly influenced by Western verse, sometimes rather too self-consciously, as in the case of Nishiwaki Junzaburō and that of Tanikawa Shuntarō. At first English and American poetry, but then more strikingly French Dadaist and Surrealist and Italian Futurist poetry became assimilated. But in the very best modern Japanese poets, there is always that disconcerting, elusive, hauntingly unique native imagery and tone, even in a work as properly upsetting as Takahashi Mutsuo's vision of sexual ecstasy in the "glorious hole" of a "men's room", in which the Roman Catholicism and his homosexual guilt and passion are miraculously wedded.

The frank imbalance of the impressionist vision in many modern Japanese poems is partly the result of the use of "free verse"; lack of rhyme is yet another "asymmetrical" element in Japanese forms. When Japanese poets first start to write poetry in English — as many now do — they seem obsessed by the desire to compose in rhyme, and it is not until they have gone beyond this stage and begin to write in more liberated modern forms that they are able to develop as truly Japanese poets. In the same way, translators who attempt to put Japanese poetry into rhyme lose that asymmetrical balance, as can be seen in the version of Hagiwara Sakurako and other poets by Graeme Wilson and Atsushi Ikuko, whose sickly chiming rhymes disfigure Hagiwara's off-beat tone; Hiroaki Sato made no such mistake in his own translations of the wonderful poet in *Howling at the Moon*.

Finally, it is a sad fact that in the Acknowledgements, among the many magazines listed, from *Parlance Review* to *Gay Sunshine*, there is not a single British publication. It is surely time for British poets to break out of the present academic domestic-provincial mode of so much of our modern verse, and embrace newer, more liberating influences.

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what we do informally we free", begins one column of print. Then, "touch finger to forehead, both objecting and sub-jecting, between these the indescribable experience", the whole is headed INLIGHT, it is also crossed out, and at the bottom of the page is scrawled "Far down your line of light your order will be filled". Some parts of the book are banal, some touching. One can only hope that Reps's volume of meditative nonsense will cheer up some of the mean and miserable. At least as they use the sandpaper bookmark provided to smooth off, meditatively, the purposefully rough edges of the light plywood binding boards, they will pause from polluting and killing. As it says on the rather decolleté dust-jacket, "all men have the same color bones" (brush strokes of a man in zazen) "no need to kill great need to still" (man in zazen) "each is the other".

## Falling still

By Michael Pye

PAUL REPS:  
10 Ways to Meditate  
55pp. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill. \$9.95.  
0 8348 0163 9

This reprint of *10 Ways to Meditate* includes eight extra pages on deep yellow paper including a fan letter:

Dear Reps, Each day I breathe as you showed me. Already I feel new. Billions of tiny voices in my tissues celebrating (sic) light. Thank you. Much love. Sally.

Thick paper provides ground for strong brushwork hovering between calligraphy, pictures and graffiti. "What we do formally we breeze,

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# The free ways of Arthur Waley

By Edward Seidensticker

I have always liked what Sir George Sanson wrote about Arthur Waley in a footnote to *Japan, A Short Cultural History*. Having been informed that *The Tale of Genji* "is a remarkable romance which it is difficult to describe without superlatives", we jump to the footnote:

And unnecessarily, for Mr Arthur Waley's translation is masterly, and itself comes very near to being a work of creative genius. Is it ungrateful to add that perhaps it does more than justice to the original — not because of any shortcomings in Murasaki, but because modern English is incomparably richer, stronger, more various and supple than Heian Japanese?

I will limit myself to the *Genji* translation, for it is the only considerable translation by Waley which I feel competent to discuss. The most obvious thing about it is that it is very well written, and that by "masterly" is meant that it gives great pleasure, then the adjective is just apt. Waley is often called a poet. More than one discussion of his work has come close to describing him as the only poet in a European language who has worked with the languages of East Asia.

Few would take exception to Sanson's praise. It may be that modern English is not always rich, strong, various, and supple, but that it is these things in the hands of certain writers. Waley was among them. This judgment has become standard, and need not be elaborated upon.

To some of us it may seem that though Waley wrote well he did not write uniquely well. Some of his more ornate writing — and his *Genji* is, by spells, very ornate — have taken on a certain dated quality not to be discerned in the works of people who wrote much earlier than he did. There is at least one respect, however, in which he does seem unique. Not touched upon by Sanson, it is his work as a pioneer, as explorer.

The first person to venture into an unknown expanse is always unique. His tracks are there, changing the expanse for everyone who ventures in afterwards. It may seem curious to describe Waley so, for European studies of East Asian literature did not begin with him. The work of such Victorians as Basil Hall Chamberlain is of a very high quality, and much of it has not been superseded. They all belong to the tradition, however, in which Sanson too may be put: missionaries, diplomats, teachers, all lived in and had personal bonds with East Asia, and so while the depth of their commitment to their studies is not to be doubted, those studies were the amateur half of their lives.

Waley's studies, and the books he made from them, were his life. He was probably the first European man of letters to undertake what was then and for decades afterwards thought a most unrealistic task, the mastering of a Far Eastern language. He studied most of them, and his command of classical Chinese and classical Japanese had scarcely a rival — in a day when a smattering of one or the other was deemed all that could be expected of a cultured person other than a native speaker.

It would perhaps be rash to say that Waley was the first non-Orientalist to read the whole of the *Genji*. Yet balance, as can be seen in the version of Hagiwara Sakurako and other poets by Graeme Wilson and Atsushi Ikuko, whose sickly chiming rhymes disfigure Hagiwara's off-beat tone; Hiroaki Sato made no such mistake in his own translations of the wonderful poet in *Howling at the Moon*.

Today, the *Genji* is familiar enough in America (and it may be more familiar yet in England) to appear occasionally in New York advertisements. Probably only haiku, among the literary products of the Japanese, enjoys similar currency. Haiku tends to be treated as if it were aphorism, which it is not. The things that are

said about the *Genji* and its author are equally misleading. Yet there it is, in a medium which demands of its jargon that it speak to large numbers of people.

For this state of affairs Waley may be given most of the credit. Before him the consensus was that the *Genji* was a bore. W. G. Aston, who wrote the first history of Japanese literature in English, admitted that he had not been able to get through it. Sir Ernest Satow was of the view that it was "only of value as marking a stage in the development of the language". Chamberlain's characterization was more spirited and no less hostile: "If the authoress of the *Genji Monogatari*, though lauded to the skies by her compatriots, has been branded by Georges Bousquet as *cette ennuyeuse Scudéry japonaise*, she surely richly deserves it."

The trouble doubtless was that these early readers did not really read, they deciphered. A necessary condition for enjoying any long work of prose is that one read it at a certain speed. We can only guess at the speed with which the young Waley pushed through it. What is certain is that he thought it worth spending a decade and more on, and so, because his translation reads so well, he made it possible for the world to read it at a good pace. The impression of tedium and intolerable length faded away. It hardly seems possible that the Victorian view would have been so hostile had those early students been able to read it in fluent, rhythmic English.

So Waley's fame is deserved, and people aware of what he accomplished would not wish it to pass. The fact remains that certain questions may properly be asked about his translating practices.

Translating has few rules. Downright error, the substituting, let us say, of a positive statement for a negative, is of course deplorable. Aside from that, almost anything goes, or at least an attempt can be made to justify it. Though I have not seen the statement in print, I have heard close friends of Waley's say that he justified the freedom of certain of his translations on the grounds that much is lost in the translation of any complex literary work, and something must therefore be added to replace it. This is a bold doctrine.

Almost any literary translator would agree that the struggle to find substitutes for locutions uncongenial to direct translation is a continuing one. "A needle in a haystack" means nothing at all when rendered literally into Japanese, and "after all" or "when all is said and done" may mean something, but not what they mean in English. The translator who does not recognize these facts is merely irresponsible.

The PEN American Center recently issued *A Translator's Model Contract*. It offers a sensible view of what the translator should be up to: "The translation should be a faithful rendition of the work into English. It shall neither omit anything from the original text nor add anything to it other than such slight verbal changes as are necessary in translating (original language) into English."

However matters may be with his Chinese translations and his shorter translations from Japanese, Waley's *Genji* cannot be made to fit this statement of purpose and duty. He cuts boldly and he elaborates ingeniously. The boldest of his excisions is one whole chapter, about two-thirds of the way through the tale. The elaboration is continuous.

I like Sanson's first sentence, gracefully bestowing praise that is well deserved. I like the second sentence better. It could have been made a simple declaration, but the interrogative form brings rich ambiguity. There is an imputation of ingratitude, but at whom is the possible offence directed? Is it Murasaki Shikibu, and does Sanson apologize for suggesting that her masterpiece might have been more masterly if it had been composed in modern English? Or is it Waley?

I like to think that, once more gracefully, of course, Sanson is childing Waley, saying to him, "It was beautifully done, old fellow, but you should not have done it". Waley embroiders very nicely, and some of the excisions are far from infelicitous; but he should have desisted.

To the conscientious translator, the assertion that he has improved upon his original may not seem un-mixed praise. He should not have wanted to improve. He should have wanted to be the faithful mimic, reproducing everything in the original that caught his eye, his heart, and sometimes his disaffection. To avoid infidelity in the guise of improvement is not easy, a fact which few people who have not worked at translation seem to understand.

A sonnet or a haiku may sometimes be perfect, one syllable of it to be improved upon. An extended work of prose fiction rarely is. Rare is the translator who never comes upon a detail he wishes he could wish away. I can imagine translators wishing that, in perhaps the nearest to perfection of all English novels, Mr Knightley's proposal to Emma was a bit more laconic, a bit more Jane-like. The *Genji* is full of flaws. The translator can see that Waley was often a victim of impatience and boredom, and that his "improvement" was a quick means of getting past it. At such times fidelity can be difficult.

The problem is complicated. A translation can be faithful in all matters of detail, putting nothing in and cutting nothing out, and yet be unfaithful in sum. This is certainly true when a brisk and sprightly work is turned into something ploddingly dull, or when a humorous work is deprived of humour because the conventions of one system have been lost and nothing has been done to replace them with those of another. It becomes necessary to look more closely at Waley's free ways with his original.

Exception may be taken to one detail of the PEN "model contract". It is in the matter of excisions. There is such a thing as an abridged translation. Abridgment can be necessary and proper. The circumstances of publication in the second language do not always accord with those of the first. A condenser seems necessary, however, the fact that the translation is incomplete should be made quite clear. Waley may have made the matter clear somewhere in the course of his *Genji* decade, but it is not mentioned in the edition which is currently available. Indeed there is at least one apology for what may seem a lacuna in the translation, in fact a lacuna in the original, and with it a strong suggestion that Waley himself would not be guilty of lacunae.

The more important question is whether the process of excising has resulted in something deeply and subtly closer to the original translation than a complete translation would have been. It may be argued that in deleting matters of interest to Murasaki Shikibu's audience but highly unlikely to interest the modern English reader, Waley did what Murasaki Shikibu would have done had she had Waley's audience.

Sometimes the argument can be made persuasively, but it is double-edged. There can be no doubt that Murasaki Shikibu was writing for a society obsessed with rank, office, and ritual, and perhaps most of all with dress, that accompaniment of rank, and with the hues and combinations that revealed superior and less than superior taste. There may be small pockets of modern English and American society that have similar preoccupations, but the details of the Japanese thing are alien and hence boring. Therefore Waley has made of the work something which, because not boring, is hearer what Murasaki Shikibu would have written for the modern audience. There is the other edge, however. An extraordinary society produced the *Genji*, which loses a part of its meaning if cut off from the concerns of that society. The patience of both

reader and translator can properly be taxed a little if the subtleties and complexities of that society are to be present.

Waley was bored with ritual and clothes, and expected his readers to be bored too, so he cut many descriptions of them. Many of the bolder excisions are not so easily explained, nor is it easy to argue that by making them he was more faithful to his original. He translated the three worst chapters in the tale, those following immediately upon Genji's death. One of them, the last of the three and the forty-fourth of the full fifty-four, is so unsatisfactory that it is widely held to be spurious. Whatever may be the scholarly arguments for this view, and they are impressive, one simply does not wish to believe that it came from the hand of the great lady. The chapter which Waley cut, on the other hand, seems very clearly hers. The thirty-eighth chapter (in his numbering of the chapters Waley gives no indication of having omitted one), it does little to advance the action. Yet it is of great lyrical beauty and emotional complexity.

On a beautiful autumn evening, as the insects of early autumn sing, there are three quiet interviews, between Genji and his young wife, who has become a nun, between Genji and a former emperor who is his natural son, though no more than three or four people in the world know of the secret, and between Genji and the emperor's consort, who wishes to become a nun. It is difficult to see why Waley should have wished to make the cut, and still more difficult to argue that in making it he improved upon his original. He dispensed with subtlety and delicacy, the more important for coming just before the great sorrow of Genji's life and his disappearance from the action.

There are lesser excisions which are no less difficult to understand. One from many examples will suffice. It is representative. The forty-first chapter, the last one in which Genji is seen, requires getting used to, but when one has read it a few times it can come to seem among the most beautiful in the whole long story. It is a reversion to an earlier form, a collection of anecdotes centred upon poems, and it is that for a purpose. Genji's echo happier days in Genji's life and take us back in the beginning, a cycle being near completion. The chapter sees us through the first full year of Genji's bereavement, the great love of his life having died in the preceding chapter. At the end of it he prepares to "leave the world", by which is meant to take holy orders. At the beginning of the next chapter he is dead.

The beauty comes in large measure from the review of the seasons, each given its poems, as in a courtly anthology. At a crucial point Waley slashes. He does it to a passage that contains seven poems, and sees the seasons and Genji from early sunniness to late autumn. The progression of the seasons is rudely interrupted. The chapter title, which means something like "wizard" or "magician", derives from one of the poems, in allusion to "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" by Po Chü-i.

New layers of time and tradition and memory are imposed by the allusion: the word "wizard" occurs only one other time in the tale, when the infant Genji's mother dies, and his father is put in mind of the same poem; and there is a nostalgic harkening back to the most powerful of all symbols on the culture of high Heian, and to the most celebrated bereavement in the whole of Chinese history. Waley called the chapter "The Mirage". This is very nice, an apt simile for the fading away of Genji. Perhaps Waley cut the poem to make his favoured title the more easy of accommodation. Whether or not it is adequate cause for cutting so much from Genji's last days is another matter.

Instances of amplification, of subtly redefining the original, are to be found on almost every page. Sometimes it is difficult to know what is

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## Ideas amidst destruction

By Gordon Daniels

AKIRA IRIYE:

Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-45  
344pp. Harvard University Press. £13.20.  
0 674 69580 1

In November 1948 the International Military Tribunal for the Far East found twenty-four of Japan's leaders guilty of conspiracy and waging aggressive war. To most judges Japan's aggression was self-evident, while "militarism" and "ultra-nationalism" sufficed to explain her wartime regime. In the post-war years these simple notions of aggression persisted, but they were gradually eroded by scholarship and political change. In Japan painstaking research challenged the Tribunal's historical simplicities, while in the United States the Vietnam war stimulated a radical reinterpretation of Asia's past. This movement to reinterpret Japanese war history has reached an impressive new pinnacle with Akira Iriye's *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-45*. This imaginative new study contrasts Japan's ideology of a new order in East Asia with the untidy complexities of wartime politics. As Iriye indicates, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was not unanimously supported by a nation committed to abandoning all relations with the West. In December 1941 Japan remained dependent on the United States for sophisticated machinery and raw materials, and a German victory was far from certain. As a result an articulate if ineffective diplomatic minority cautioned against war, and attacked a strategy based upon the untidy ideal of pan-Asian harmony. Like earlier writers Iriye chronicles Japan's military and political failures in China, but he also reminds us that Sino-Japanese enmity undermined the whole concept of the co-prosperity sphere.

Yet Iriye's work and his achievement are not confined to a reinterpretation of Japanese wartime thought. His mastery of Western and oriental languages enables him to set Japanese developments alongside American policy so as to contrast their changing visions of a post-war world. In the early years of war Roosevelt also sought to create a new order with China as a counterpoise to aggressive Japan. America

sent military supplies and General Stilwell to Chungking and urged Chiang Kai-shek to cooperate in policing the post-war world. But Roosevelt was to be cruelly disappointed. Chiang was not only corrupt, he was loath to fight, and exasperation replaced hope of a renaissance in Chungking. Yet this disillusion with China was not without a creative outcome. It confirmed a growing belief that a friendly Japan was essential to a stable world. As China crumbled, Grew and Borah's ideas were strengthened and Forrestal wondered whether Japan might be a useful friend against Soviet power. In many respects American officials had long memories. They recalled Japan's liberal 1920s and believed that democrats would emerge to lead an amiable regime. The Emperor was retained he could lead emancipation, and provide a focus of strength for friends of freedom and the United States.

Thus behind the clamour of war both Washington and Tokyo slowly abandoned their radical schemes. In both capitals men hesitantly returned to old ideas of Pacific cooperation and free markets, and utopian futures lost much of their appeal. Like John Whitney Hall, Professor Iriye sees the Pacific War as tragedy rather than conspiracy, and notes that as ideas converged physical destruction overwhelmed thought. This delayed peace until thousands more men were maimed and killed.

Perhaps Iriye's book errs in abstracting ideas too far from the destruction which surrounded Japanese reflection. Relations between diplomats and soldiers might have been more fully explored; but this subtle investigation of minority views is in itself deeply rewarding. It reveals the survival of internationalism in an embittered world. The Pacific War still demands research and reinterpretation, but Professor Iriye reminds us that it was a short interlude in a longer struggle for understanding and peace.

## Factories and factions

By Keith Thurley

STEPHEN S. LARGE:

Organized Workers and Socialist Politics in Inter-war Japan  
326pp. Cambridge University Press.  
0 521 23675 4

The current fashion of admiring Japanese management practice, especially in the matter of labour relations, has already stimulated the publication of a number of highly superficial books on the subject and no doubt there will be a great many others on the way. There are three major faults with this literature. Firstly, they trade in ideology and values rather than analysis or dispassionate examination of evidence. Secondly, they are in reality using reported models of Japanese systems to attack British or American practice - or what is alleged to be that practice. Thirdly, they pay little attention to the historical context of Japanese behaviour or ideas. Stephen Large's book on the labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s in Japan is therefore, by contrast, a pleasure to read and highly stimulating in its implications. He commits none of these common errors and settles for a detailed account of the often bewildering story of the growth of union federations and socialist parties, dominated as today, by factional struggle and constant infighting. His theme is a broad one. How can we explain the weakness of the Left in Japan? Was it due to the apostasy of the leadership? Or are there more fundamental structural

features of Japanese society that explain the triumph of Fascism?

Large argues that there was a chance of a victory for social democracy in the late 1920s. Although at its height the union movement of the time could not be said to organize more than 7.9 per cent of the labour force (in 1931) and although most unions "were largely confined to small and medium-scale factories, where, without the pressure of industrial paternalism, it was relatively easier for the labour movement to organise those workers who remained discontented with low wages and poor conditions", nevertheless, by 1937, the main socialist party (*Shakai Taihu*) had thirty-seven Diet members, was the third largest in the country and had captured two-thirds of worker votes. *Organized Workers and Socialist Politics in Inter-war Japan*, however, shows in its detailed analysis of the organization of the main union federation - *Nihon Rodo Sodomei* - that the influence of radical socialist thinking declined steadily from the first outbreak of anarchist ideas and Communist/ Marxist views in the early 1920s. The main stream of labour movement thinking was pragmatic, devoted to securing union organization rather than socialist revolution and, in the 1930s, increasingly rationalistic and influenced by military ideas. Large's thesis is that the extreme Left was broken by the police, with the tacit approval of the moderate Left, who increasingly came to terms with the forces of military and Fascist thinking in the later 1930s. The expansion of Japanese power into China and the growth of the war economy, increasingly made possible a corporate state in which the councils of *Sampo* - the government-organized cooperation meetings of employers and

workers - became more acceptable than independent trade unions.

Two factors behind this story need emphasis. Firstly, the growth and success of large-firm paternalism - with its nascent enterprise unionism - was increasingly able to prevent the independent unions from influencing that sector of private enterprise. Secondly, the organization of factories on a *Oyakata-Kobun* basis (boss-follower) meant that personal loyalty was relied upon instead of political or class consciousness.

Large argues, as do many writers on Japan, that there was a crucial lack of class consciousness at the base of the labour movement.

The excellence of this study does not prevent a number of doubts arising in the mind of the reader. If we grant the importance of leader-follower ties in Japanese groups, we also need to explain this. What factors sustained such ties over fifteen to twenty years? If pragmatism was the basis of worker attitudes and the leader behaviour, what lies behind the failure to penetrate the organization of the larger firms? There seems no real ideological barrier between Japanese "paternalism" and a moderate labour movement, as the growth of enterprise unionism since 1936 has shown.

One is left with a number of questions on present-day Japan. Is the Left likely to wither in a world recession, as it did in the 1930s? Is ideology still largely a matter of factory and company consciousness? Is military and Fascist thinking in the Japanese mind still seen as a foreign heresy?

The answers to these questions seems to rest on demonstrating how far real social change has taken place since the 1930s. This remains an open question.

FICTION

## Materia medica

By Stuart Sutherland

RICHARD GORDON:

Doctors' Daughters  
138pp. Heinemann. £5.95.  
434 30258 9

If an age can be judged by its popular fiction, the most esteemed figures in Victorian times were clergymen, politicians and lawyers. Nowadays none of these professions evoke much interest. The role of the clergy is limited to the perfunctory performance of christening, marriage and funeral services; most people consult a lawyer only over the sordid details of changing house or spouse; and modern politicians are such shabby figures that they inspire neither envy nor laughter. Today's readers turn instead to the doings of academics, vets, and doctors.

Novels on academics should perhaps be discounted, since they are less a reflection of public taste than of the growth of university departments of English, whose inmates know too little of the world to write about anything but one another. The popularity of vets in a nation that often punishes cruelty to animals more severely than cruelty to children is unremarkable. As for doctors, medicine is perhaps the only profession for which the awe and respect of the public has actually increased in recent years. The hangman has gone and few fear excommunication, but the power of medicine to save or inadvertently - and sometimes deliberately but compassionately - to kill has vastly increased. Moreover, with the decline of the family lawyer and the local vicar, doctors are expected to deal as much with the agonies of the

soul as with the aches and pains of the body.

If Richard Gordon's *Doctors' Daughters* is anything to go by, doctors are poorly served by novelists. It is a feebly written, plotless, witless farce, in which two young women doctors take over the practice of three old codgers in a cathedral town. Some indication of its vulgarity is that Gordon apparently thinks it funny for a woman doctor attending a birth unexpectedly to give birth herself in the same bed as the patient. The dialogue is so stilted that the author feels obliged to let his readers know whether the characters are addressing one another *smilingly, icily, stiffly, eagerly, sharply, hopefully, brusquely, genially, darkly, severely, shrilly, or shyly*: only the last instills any hope in the reader.

Although *Doctors' Daughters* will doubtless be as popular as Gordon's previous "Doctor" novels, it is hard to say where its appeal will lie. Its worn-out metaphors lend it a false literary air ("It was past the third Sunday in Lent, when Mirebury felt against its cheek the timorous antennae of spring"), and references to Chateau Latour, All Souls and the Athenaeum may gratify the snobbish. But its characters are uniformly vapid and it lacks both humour and drama.

It is hard to think of a recent novel that treats doctors as sympathetically as did George Eliot in *Middlemarch*, or even the late A. J. Cronin. Even the best plays written around medicine, like *The Doctor's Dilemma* or *The National Health* treat doctors largely as figures of fun, a tradition of long standing that goes back to Ben Jonson and Molière. Perhaps most doctors, unlike academics, are too busy to record in fiction what their lives are really like.

## End of term report

By Lindsay Duguid

BRUCE ARNOLD:

The Muted Swan  
304pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.  
0 241 10687 7

*The Muted Swan*, a sequel to the highly-praised *A Singer at the Wedding* and *The Song of the Nightingale*, is the third volume in a tetralogy; the fact that the sequence is called a "tetralogy" rather than a more prosaic quartet gives an indication of the author's seriousness of purpose. The novels deal with the adolescence of a self-conscious and unnamed narrator recalling the significant events of his boyhood; what mainly concerns his unreliable, heavy-drinking father and his school, Coppinger.

The hero (his namelessness is a rather irritating device which does not seem to point to any universal significance in the character), is now in his last term of school. During the course of the book he is reunited with his brother and sister, whom he has not seen since childhood; he experiences "a strange parting" from his father (always Father in the text), witnesses his house master making love to his house master's Spanish wife, fishes the drowned body of the choirboy Wickham, the object of his devotion, out of the school swimming pool and watches the Coronation Procession of Elizabeth II. The emphasis however is not on the dramatic nature of these events but on the narrator's responses. The interpolation of passages such as this: "Nevertheless because they mattered to me, because I looked up to them both with admiration and affection, because they both had certain extended perspectives on my life, very different both in time scale and extent, but still there and inescapable, part of me desired to draw them in and make them an audience to my own endeavour, such as it was, at significant moments in the story tends to clog the narration. In addition the author attempts references to the earlier books which can read like the worst bits of Anthony Powell: 'Philip was a friend, three or four years older than me, he had been head of Forrest's house

when I had been a junior in it. And his kindness had been of particular value during a strange set of episodes'. Characters and places have more symbolic value than concrete reality, and Arnold's efforts to get everything down often confuse more than they explain. His description of the father's gesture of farewell for example - "sitting there, weak, defeated, his jaw and hands slack and resigned, his eyes bloodshot, the haggard look of wounded dignity upon him, he smiled up at me, a sad smile of capitulation and farewell," - is intended as the climax to a good scene of drunken emotion and embarrassment in a pub.

There are some interesting insights into the adolescent mind (Arnold is good on the earnestness of youth, making it a matter of interest that his clever hero has progressed from enthusiasm for Keats to devotion to T. S. Eliot) and the school scenes have a nostalgic charm. But *The Muted Swan* is slacker and less well written than the two earlier novels, despite the fact that these contained fewer startling revelations. The reader may begin to sympathize with Wickham's remark to the hero, "You take it all too seriously". It is hard to see how the material justifies another volume.

Originally published as *Triptyque* by Les Editions de Minuit in 1973, and first published in English by John Calder in 1977, *Triptych*, by Claude Simon, translated by Helen R. Lane, has recently been re-issued in paperback with an introduction by John Fletcher (171pp. John Calder. £3.95. 0 7145 3787 X). Claude Simon is widely considered to be one of the most important and original living novelists; this is the eighth of his novels to appear in English. John Fletcher writes of it: "based to some extent on childhood memories of the Jura mountains in Eastern France, the three separate and distinct stories are told not consecutively, but concurrently... The divisions in the novel are made simply to divide the text into three parts, and thus make the book resemble a triptych (as in painting) physically as well as metaphorically... The novel is an act of homage to the great triptychs of Francis Bacon". Claude Simon's latest novel, *Georgi*, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

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